


# Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru



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works of  
Jawaharlal  
Nehru**





PROBABLY THE LAST PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN WITH KAMALA



# Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru

Volume Six



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## FOREWORD

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Advisory Board

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## FOREWORD

Jawaharlal Nehru is one of the key figures of the twentieth century. He symbolised some of the major forces which have transformed our age.

When Jawaharlal Nehru was young, history was still the privilege of the West; the rest of the world lay in deliberate darkness. The impression given was that the vast continents of Asia and Africa existed merely to sustain their masters in Europe and North America. Jawaharlal Nehru's own education in Britain could be interpreted, in a sense, as an attempt to secure for him a place within the pale. His letters of the time are evidence of his sensitivity, his interest in science and international affairs as well as of his pride in India and Asia. But his personality was veiled by his shyness and a facade of nonchalance, and perhaps, outwardly there was not much to distinguish him from the ordinary run of men. Gradually there emerged the warm and universal being who became intensely involved with the problems of the poor and the oppressed in all lands. In doing so, Jawaharlal Nehru gave articulation and leadership to millions of people in his own country and in Asia and Africa.

That imperialism was a curse which should be lifted from the brows of men, that poverty was incompatible with civilisation, that nationalism should be poised on a sense of international community and that it was not sufficient to brood on these things when action was urgent and compelling — these were the principles which inspired and gave vitality to Jawaharlal Nehru's activities in the years of India's struggle for freedom and made him not only an intense nationalist but one of the leaders of humanism.

No particular ideological doctrine could claim Jawaharlal Nehru for its own. Long days in jail were spent in reading widely. He drew much from the thought of the East and West and from the philosophies of the past and the present. Never religious in the formal sense, yet he had a deep love for the culture and tradition of his own land. Never a rigid Marxist, yet he was deeply influenced by that theory and was particularly impressed by what he saw in the Soviet Union on his first visit in 1927. However, he realised that the world was too complex, and man had too many facets, to be encompassed by any single or total explanation. He himself was a socialist with an abhorrence of regimentation and a democrat who was anxious to reconcile his faith in civil liberty with the necessity of mitigating economic and social wretchedness. His struggles,



both within himself and with the outside world, to adjust such seeming contradictions are what make his life and work significant and fascinating.

As a leader of free India, Jawaharlal Nehru recognised that his country could neither stay out of the world nor divest itself of its own interests in world affairs. But to the extent that it was possible, Jawaharlal Nehru sought to speak objectively and to be a voice of sanity in the shrill phases of the 'cold war'. Whether his influence helped on certain occasions to maintain peace is for the future historian to assess. What we do know is that for a long stretch of time he commanded an international audience reaching far beyond governments, that he spoke for ordinary, sensitive, thinking men and women around the globe and that his was a constituency which extended far beyond India.

So the story of Jawaharlal Nehru is that of a man who evolved, who grew in storm and stress till he became the representative of much that was noble in his time. It is the story of a generous and gracious human being who summed up in himself the resurgence of the 'third world' as well as the humanism which transcends dogmas and is adapted to the contemporary context. His achievement, by its very nature and setting, was much greater than that of a Prime Minister. And it is with the conviction that the life of this man is of importance not only to scholars but to all, in India and elsewhere, who are interested in the valour and compassion of the human spirit that the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund has decided to publish a series of volumes consisting of all that is significant in what Jawaharlal Nehru spoke and wrote. There is, as is to be expected in the speeches and writings of a man so engrossed in affairs and gifted with expression, much that is ephemeral; this will be omitted. The official letters and memoranda will also not find place here. But it is planned to include everything else and the whole corpus should help to remind us of the quality and endeavour of one who was not only a leader of men and a lover of mankind, but a completely integrated human being.

Indira Gandhi.

New Delhi

18 January 1972

Chairman

Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund

## EDITORIAL NOTE

In October 1933, in his articles *Whither India?*, Jawaharlal Nehru analysed clearly the Indian situation and stressed the appropriateness of socialism as the goal. But in the following months the growing disintegration of the Congress organisation and the counterpart of increasing official repression made obvious that Jawaharlal Nehru's hopes lay very far in the future. He himself was arrested on 12 February 1934 immediately after his visit to various places in Bihar which had been devastated by an earthquake.

Jawaharlal Nehru remained in prison for over 18 months, till his release, because of his wife's illness, on 3 September 1935. The diaries maintained by him in these years and the letters he wrote at this time, reveal his distress with the trends of Congress policy and the seeming failure of Mahatma Gandhi's leadership as well as his concern with his wife's health.

A few letters which belong chronologically to earlier volumes but which were located after those volumes had been published have been included in an appendix.

Much of the material included in this volume has been selected from the papers of Jawaharlal Nehru. The cooperation extended by the Director and staff of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library is acknowledged.

The Maharashtra Government, the U.P. Government and the National Archives of India have kindly allowed us to utilise material in their possession. Letters and texts of speeches and statements published in *The Hindu*, *The Leader*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The Times of India*, *The Bombay Chronicle*, *The Tribune*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *The Pioneer*, *The Searchlight*, *Advance*, *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* and *Aaj* are reprinted with their consent. The Asia Publishing House has permitted the reprinting of two letters from *A Bunch of Old Letters*.





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## WHITHER INDIA?

A. Whither India?

The newcomer from prison has long been cut off from the rough and tumble of life and politics, and yet he has a certain advantage on his side. He can take a more detached view; he is not so much wrapped up in the confusion of the moment; he may be able to stress principles when others argue about petty tactics; he may actually see the realities under the surface of ever-changing phenomena.

Many people ask: What are we to do? The mouths of most of those who could answer, or help in framing the answer, are shut either in prison or outside. But free advice, often accompanied by threats, comes to us in an unending stream from those who rule us and their faithful followers in this land. They warn us and threaten us and advise us and offer us good advice by turns, anxious to influence us and get us out of the right approach to us. Let us leave them and get on our own feet for the moment; such gifts, even when free, are apt to be suspect.

Things cannot come out of nothing; it must be preceded by thought. Thought which is not meant to lead to action has been called an abortion; action which is not based on thought is chaos and confusion. It is worthwhile therefore to clear our minds of all the tangled webs that may have grown there, to forget for the moment all immediate problems before us, the difficult knots we have to unravel, the day to day worries, and go back a little to basic facts and principles. What exactly do we want? And why do we want it?

I speak with diffidence because I have for long been cut off from the outside world, but I have a feeling that little attention is paid to these basic facts and principles. The censorship may be partly to blame for this, or the fear of it, but even that I think is not a sufficient explanation. Attention seems to be concentrated on the most trivial details and vital matters are ignored. Should Gandhi be the Viceroy or not? Will Stanley Baldwin triumph over Winston Churchill?

A series of articles in the Indian press on 9, 10 and 11 October 1931 and their reprint in a pamphlet along with pages 3 and 4 of the Indian press, Ministerial Council said that he desired to appoint the Viceroy.

The Indian press said that Baldwin's Indian policy and this became an issue in the contest for leadership in the Conservative Party.





## 1. Whither India?<sup>1</sup>

The newcomer from prison has long been cut off from the rough and tumble of life and politics, and yet he has a certain advantage on his side. He can take a more detached view; he is not so much wrapped up in the controversies of the moment; he may be able to stress principles when others argue about petty tactics; he may actually see the realities under the surface of ever-changing phenomena.

Many people ask: What are we to do? The mouths of most of those who could answer, or help in framing the answer, are shut either in prison or outside. But free advice, often accompanied by threats, comes to us in an unending stream from those who rule us and their faithful followers in this land. They warn us and threaten us and cajole us and offer us good advice by turns, anxious to influence us and yet uncertain of the right approach to us. Let us leave them and their advice for the moment; such gifts, even when free, are apt to be suspect.

Right action cannot come out of nothing; it must be preceded by thought. Thought which is not meant to lead to action has been called an abortion; action which is not based on thought is chaos and confusion. It is worthwhile therefore to clear our minds of all the tangled webs that may have grown there, to forget for the moment the immediate problems before us, the difficult knots we have to unravel, the day to day worries, and go back a little to basic facts and principles. What exactly do we want? And why do we want it?

I write with diffidence because I have for long been cut off from the nationalist press, but I have a feeling that little attention is paid to these basic facts and principles. The censorship may be partly to blame for this, or the fear of it, but even that, I think, is not a sufficient explanation. Attention seems to be concentrated on the most trivial of issues and vital matters are ignored. Should Gandhiji see the Viceroy or not?<sup>2</sup> Will Stanley Baldwin triumph over Winston Churchill?<sup>3</sup>

1. Published as a series of articles in the Indian press on 9, 10 and 11 October 1933 and later reprinted as a pamphlet along with *post* items, 3 and 4.
2. After his release, Mahatma Gandhi said that he desired to meet the Viceroy 'to explore avenues of peace'.
3. Churchill was a strong critic of Baldwin's India policy and this became an issue in the contest for leadership in the Conservative Party.



and by industry as a rule, but cursed by bankers and those who have fixed incomes. Early in the nineteenth century, England deliberately sacrificed her agriculture for her rising industry. A few years ago, in 1923, by insisting on keeping the value of the pound sterling at par she sacrificed, to some extent, her industry to her banking and financial system, and faced industrial troubles and a huge general strike.<sup>5</sup>

Any number of such instances can be given; they deal with the rival claims of different groups of the possessing classes. A more vital conflict of interest arises between these possessing classes as a whole and the others; between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. All this is obvious enough, but every effort is made to confuse the real issue by the holders of power, whether political or economic. The British Government is continually declaring before high heaven that they are trustees for our masses and India and England have common interests and can march hand in hand to a common destiny. Few people are taken in by this because nationalism makes us realise the inherent conflict between the two national interests. But nationalism does not make us realise the equally inherent and fundamental conflict between economic interests within the nation. There is an attempt to cover this up and avoid it on the ground that the national issue must be settled first. Appeals are issued for unity between different classes and groups to face the common national foe, and those who point out the inherent conflict between landlord and tenant, or capitalist and wage labourer are criticised.

We may take it that the average person does not like conflict and continuous tension; he prefers peace and quiet, and is even prepared to sacrifice much for it. But the ostrich-like policy of refusing to see a conflict and a disorder which not only exist but are eating into society's vitals, to blind oneself to reality, will not end the conflict and the disorder or suddenly change reality into unreality; for a politician or a man of action such a policy can only end in disaster. It is therefore essential that we keep this in mind and fashion our idea of freedom accordingly. We cannot escape having to answer the question, now or later: for the freedom of which class or classes in India are we especially striving for? Do we place the masses, the peasantry and the workers first, or some other small class at the head of our list? Let

5. After the war the British Government adopted a deflationary policy to protect the value of the pound sterling. In 1923, the attempts of Baldwin's government to introduce a protective tariff to help British industries were foiled by the bankers and the financiers and this led to labour unrest and unemployment.



us give the benefits of freedom to as many groups and classes as possible, but essentially whom do we stand for, and when a conflict arises whose side must we take? To say that we shall not answer that question now is itself an answer and taking of sides, for it means that we stand by the existing order, the *status quo*.

The form of government is after all a means to an end; even freedom itself is a means, the end being human well-being, human growth, the end of poverty and disease and suffering and the opportunity for everyone to live the "good life", physically and mentally. What the "good life" is, is a matter we cannot go into here, but most people will agree that freedom is essential to it—national freedom so far as the nation is concerned, personal freedom so far as the individual is concerned. For every restriction and inhibition stops growth and development and produces, apart from economic disorders, complexes and perversions in the nation and individual. So freedom is necessary. Equally necessary is the will and the capacity for cooperation. Modern life grows so complex, there is so much interdependence, that cooperation is the very breath that keeps it functioning.

The long course of history shows us a succession of different forms of government and changing economic forms of production and organisation. The two fit in and shape and influence each other. When economic change goes ahead too fast and the forms of government remain more or less static, a hiatus occurs, which is usually bridged over by a sudden change called revolution. The tremendous importance of economic events in shaping history and forms of government is almost universally admitted now.

We are often told that there is a world of difference between the East and the West. The West is said to be materialistic, the East spiritual, religious etc. What exactly the East signifies is seldom indicated, for the East includes the Bedouins of the Arabian deserts, the Hindus of India, the nomads of the Siberian steppes, the pastoral tribes of Mongolia, the typically irreligious Confucians of China, and the Samurai of Japan. There are tremendous national and cultural differences between the different countries of Asia as well as of Europe; but there is no such thing as East and West except in the minds of those who wish to make this an excuse for imperialist domination, or those who have inherited such myths and fictions from a confused metaphysical past. Differences there are but they are chiefly due to different stages of economic growth.

We see, in north-western Europe, autocracy and feudalism giving place to the present capitalist order involving competition and large scale production. The old small holdings disappear; the feudal checks



on the serfs and cultivators go, and these agriculturists are also deprived of the little land they had. Large numbers of landless people are thrown out of employment and they have no land to fall back upon. A landless, propertyless proletariat is thus created. At the same time the checks and the controlled prices of the limited market of feudal times disappear, and the open market appears. Ultimately this leads to the world market, the characteristic feature of capitalism.

Capitalism builds up on the basis of the landless proletariat, which could be employed as wage labourers in the factories and the open market, where the machine-made goods could be sold. It grows rapidly and spreads all over the world. In the producing countries it was an active and living capitalism; in the colonial and consuming countries it was just a passive consumption of the goods made by machine industry in the West. North-western Europe, and a little later, North America, exploit the resources of the world; they exploit Asia, Africa, East Europe and South America. They add vastly to the wealth of the world but this wealth is largely concentrated in a few nations and a few hands.

In this growth of capitalism, dominion over India was of vital importance to England. India's gold, in the early stages, helped in the further industrialisation of England. And then India became a great producer of raw material to feed the factories of England and a huge market to consume the goods made in these factories. England, in her passionate desire to accumulate wealth, sacrificed her agriculture to her industry. England became almost a kind of vast city and India the rural area attached to her.

The concentration of wealth in fewer hands went on. But the exploitation of India and other countries brought so much wealth to England that some of it trickled down to the working class and their standards of living rose. Working class agitations were controlled and soothed by concessions from the capitalist owners, which they could well afford from the profits of imperialist exploitation. Wages rose; hours of work went down; there were insurance and other welfare schemes for the workers. A general prosperity in England took the edge off working class discontent.

In India, passive industrialisation meant an ever growing burden on land. She became just a consumer of foreign machine-made goods. Her own cottage industries were partly destroyed forcibly, and partly by economic forces, and nothing took their place. All the ingredients and conditions for industrialisation were present, but England did not encourage this, and indeed tried to prevent it by taxing machinery.



And so the burden on the land grew and with it unemployment and poverty, and there was a progressive ruralisation of India.

But the process of history and economics cannot be stopped for long. Although general poverty was increasing, small groups accumulated some capital and wanted fields for investment. And so machine industry grew in India, partly with Indian capital, very much more so with foreign capital. Indian capital was largely dependent on foreign capital and, in particular, could be controlled by the foreign banking system. It is well-known that the World War gave a great push to Indian industry and afterwards, for reasons of imperial policy, England changed her policy towards Indian industry and began to encourage it, but mostly with foreign capital. The growth of so-called *swadeshi* industries in India thus represented, to a very great extent, the increasing hold of British capital on India.

The growth of industries and nationalist movements in all the countries of the East checked Western exploitation and the profits of Western capitalism began to go down. War debts and other consequences of the war were a tremendous burden for all the countries concerned. There was not so much money or profits of industry to be distributed to the working class in the West, and the discontent and pressure of the workers grew. There was also the living incentive and inspiration of the Russian Revolution for the workers.

Meanwhile two other processes were working silently but with great rapidity. One was the concentration of wealth and industrial power in fewer hands by the formation of huge trusts, cartels, and combines. The other was a continuous improvement in technique in the methods of production, leading to greater mechanisation, far greater production, and more unemployment as workers were replaced by machinery. And this led to a curious result. Just when industry was producing goods on the biggest mass scale in history, there were few people to buy them as the great majority were too poor to be able to afford them. The armies of the unemployed were not earning anything, so how could they spend? And even the majority of those earning had little to spare. A new truth suddenly dawned on the perplexed minds of the great captains of industry (this dawning process has not yet taken place among the leaders of industry in India), and the truth was this: that mass production necessitates mass consumption. But if the masses have no money how are they to buy or consume? And what of production then? So production is stopped or restricted and the wheels of industry slow down till they barely move. Unemployment grows all the more and this again makes consumption diminish.



This is the crisis of capitalism which has had the world by the throat for over four years. Essentially it is due to the ill-distribution of the world's wealth, to its concentration in a few hands. And the disease seems to be of the essence of capitalism and grows with it till it eats and destroys the very system which created it. There is no lack of money in the world, no lack of food-stuffs, or the many other things that man requires. The world is richer today than it has ever been and holds promise of untold advance in the near future. And yet the system breaks down and while millions starve and endure privation, huge quantities of food-stuffs and other articles are destroyed, insect pests are let loose on the fields to destroy crops, harvests are not gathered, and nations meet together to confer how to restrict future crops of wheat and cotton and tea and coffee and so many other articles. From the beginning of history man has fought with nature to get the barest necessities of life, and now that nature's wealth is poured out before him, enough to remove poverty forever from the world, his only way of dealing with it is to burn and destroy it, and become poorer and more destitute in the process.

History has never offered a more amazing paradox. It seems clear enough that the capitalist system of industry, whatever its services in the past may have been, is no longer suited to the present methods of production. Technical advance has gone far ahead of the existing social structure and, as in the past, this hiatus causes most of our present-day disorders. Till that lag is made up and a new system in keeping with the new technique is adopted, the disorders are likely to continue. The change-over to the new system is of course opposed by those who have vested interests in the old system and though this old system is dying before their eyes, they prefer to hold on to their little rather than share a lot with others.

It is not, fundamentally, a moral issue, as some people imagine, although there is a moral side to it. It is not a question of blaming capitalism or cursing capitalists and the like. Capitalism has been of the greatest service to the world and individual capitalists are but tiny wheels in the big machine. The question now is whether the capitalist system has not outlived its day and must now give place to a better and a saner ordering of human affairs, which is more in keeping with the progress of science and human knowledge.

In India, during this period, the tremendous burden on land continued and even increased, despite the growth of industry in certain areas. Economic discontent increased. The middle classes grew up, and finding no sufficient scope for self-development, demanded political changes and took to agitation. More or less similar causes worked all



over the colonial and dependent East. Especially after the war, national movements grew rapidly in Egypt and most of the countries of Asia. These movements were essentially due to the distress of the masses and the lower middle classes. There was a strange similarity even in the methods employed by these movements—noncooperation, boycotts of legislatures, boycotts of goods, hartals, strikes, etc. Occasionally there were violent outbreaks, as in Egypt and Syria, but stress was laid far more on peaceful methods. In India, of course, nonviolence was made a basic principle by the Congress at the suggestion of Gandhiji. All these national struggles for freedom have continued till now and they are bound to continue till a solution of the basic problem is found. Fundamentally, this solution is not merely a question of satisfying the natural desire for self-rule but one of filling hungry stomachs.

The great revolutionary nationalist urge in Asia of the after-war years gradually exhausted itself for the time being and conditions stabilised themselves. In India this took the form of the Swarajist entry into the Assembly and the Councils. In Europe also the middle nineteen-twenties was a period of settling down and adaptation to the new conditions created by the World War. The revolution that had hovered all over Europe in 1919 and 1920 failed to come off and receded into the background. American gold poured into Europe and revived to some extent the war-weary and disillusioned peoples of that continent and created a false appearance of prosperity. But this prosperity had no real basis and the crash came in 1929 when the United States of America stopped lending money to Europe and South America. Many factors, and especially the inherent conflicts of a declining capitalism, contributed to this crash, and the house of cards of after-war capitalist prosperity began to tumble down. That process of tumbling down has been going on at a tremendous pace for four years and there is no end to it yet. It is called the slump, trade depression, the crisis, etc., but it is really the evening of the capitalist system and the world is being compelled by circumstances to recognise this. International cooperation has failed, the world market which was the essential basis of capitalism is disappearing, and each nation is trying frantically to shift for itself at the cost of others. Whatever the future may bring, one thing is certain: that the old order has gone and all the king's horses and all the king's men will not set it up again.

As the old capitalist order has tottered, the challenge to it by the growing forces of labour has grown more intense. This challenge, when it has become dangerous, has induced the possessing classes to sink their petty differences and band themselves together to fight the common foe. This has led to fascism and, in its milder forms, to the formation



of so-called national governments. Essentially, these are the last ditch efforts of the possessing classes, or the "kept classes" as they have been called by an American economist, to hold on to what they have. The struggle becomes more intense and the forms of nineteenth century democracy are discarded. But fascism or national governments offer no solution to the fundamental economic inconsistencies of the present-day capitalist system and so long as they do not remove the inequalities of wealth and solve the problem of distribution, they are doomed to fail. Of the major capitalist countries the United States of America is the only place where some attempt is being made today towards lessening, to a slight extent, inequalities of wealth by state action. Carried to a logical conclusion, President Roosevelt's programme<sup>6</sup> will lead to a form of state socialism; it is far more likely that the effort will fail and result in fascism. England, as is her habit, is grimly muddling through and waiting for something to happen. Meanwhile she has derived considerable help from India's gold resources. But all this is temporary relief only and the nations slide downhill and approach the brink.

Thus, if we survey the world today, we find that capitalism, having solved the problem of production, helplessly faces the allied problem of distribution and is unable to solve it. It was not in the nature of the capitalist system to deal satisfactorily with distribution, and production alone makes the world top-heavy and unbalanced. To find a solution for distributing wealth and purchasing power evenly is to put an end to the basic inequalities of the capitalist system and to replace capitalism itself by a more scientific system.

Capitalism has led to imperialism and to the conflicts of imperialist Powers in search for colonial areas for exploitation, for areas of raw produce and for markets for manufactured goods. It has led to ever increasing conflicts with the rising nationalism of colonial countries, and to social conflicts with powerful movements of the exploited working class. It has resulted in recurrent crises, political and economic, leading to economic and tariff wars as well as political wars on an enormous scale. Every subsequent crisis is on a bigger scale than the previous one, and now we live in a perpetual state of crisis and slump and the shadow of war darkens the horizon.

And yet it is well to remember that the world today has a surfeit of food and the other good things of life. Terrible want exists because the

6. Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945); Democrat President of the U.S.A., 1933-45. The New Deal programme tried to increase production, create employment and stabilise prices.

present system does not know how to distribute them. Repeated international conferences have failed to find a way out because they represented the interests of vested interests and dared not touch the system itself. They grope blindly in the dark in their stuffy rooms while the foundations of the house they built are being sapped by the advance of science and economic events. Everywhere thinkers have recognised the utter inadequacy of the existing system, though they have differed as to the remedies. Communists and socialists point with confidence to the way of socialism and they are an ever growing power for they have science and logic on their side. In America a great stir was caused recently by the technocrats, a group of engineers who want to do away with money itself and to substitute for it a unit of energy, an erg. In England the social credit theories of Major Douglas,<sup>7</sup> according to which the whole production of the nation will be evenly distributed to the whole population—a kind of “dividends for all”—find increasing acceptance. Barter takes the place of trade both in the domestic and the international market. The growth of these revolutionary theories even among the well-to-do classes, and especially the intellectuals, is in itself an indication of the tremendous change in the mentality that is taking place in the world. How many of us can conceive a world without money and with the invisible erg as its measure of value? And yet this is soberly and earnestly advocated not by wild agitators but by well-known economists and engineers.

This is the world background.

The Asiatic background is intimately related to this and yet it has its peculiar features. Asia is the main field of conflict between nationalism and imperialism. Asia is still undeveloped as compared to Europe and North America. It has a vast population which can consume goods if they had the necessary purchasing power to do so. To the hard pressed imperialist Powers seeking frantically for areas of economic expansion, Asia still offers a field, though nationalism offers many obstructions. Hence the talk of a “push to Asia” to find an outlet for the surplus goods of the West and thus stabilise Western capitalism for another period. Capitalism is a young and growing force in the East; it has not, as in India, wholly overthrown feudalism yet. But even before capitalism had established itself, other forces, inimical to it, have risen

7. Clifford Hugh Douglas (1879-1952); British engineer and social economist who formulated the theory of social credit. This held that economic depressions were caused by maldistribution due to insufficient purchasing power. It proposed the redistribution of purchasing power by issuing dividends to every citizen.



to challenge it. And it is obvious that if capitalism collapses in Europe and America it cannot survive in Asia.

Nationalism is still the strongest force in Asia (we can ignore for our present purpose the Soviet territories of Asia). This is natural as a country under alien domination must inevitably think first in terms of nationalism. But the powerful economic forces working for change in the world today have influenced this nationalism to an ever increasing extent and everywhere it is appearing in socialist garb. Gradually the nationalist struggle for political freedom is becoming a social struggle also for economic freedom. Independence and the socialist state become the objectives, with varying degrees of stress being laid on the two aspects of the problem. As political freedom is delayed, the other aspect assumes greater importance, and it now seems probable, especially because of world conditions, that political and social emancipation will come together to some at least of the countries of Asia.

This is the Asiatic background.

In India, as in other Asiatic colonial countries, we find a struggle today between the old nationalist ideology and the new economic ideology. Most of us have grown up under the nationalist tradition and it is hard to give up the mental habits of a lifetime. And yet we realise that this outlook is inadequate, it does not fit in with existing conditions in our country or in the world; there is a hiatus, a lag. We try to bridge this hiatus but the process of crossing over to a new ideology is always a painful one. Many of us are confused and perplexed today because of this. But the crossing has to be made, unless we are to remain in a stagnant backwater, overwhelmed from time to time by the wash of the boats that move down the river of progress. We must realise that the nineteenth century cannot solve the problems of the twentieth, much less can the seventh century or earlier ages do so.

Having glanced at the general background of Asia and the world we can have a clearer view of our own national problem. India's freedom affects each one of us intimately and we are apt to look upon it as a thing apart and unconnected with world events. But the Indian problem is a part of the Asiatic problem and is tied up with the problems of the world. We cannot, even if we will it, separate it from the rest. What happens in India will affect the world and world events will change India's future. Indeed it may be said that the three great world problems today are: the fate of capitalism, which means the fate of Europe and America, the future of India, and the future of China, and all these are inter-related.

India's struggle today is part of the great struggle which is going on all over the world for the emancipation of the oppressed. Essentially,



this is an economic struggle, with hunger and want as its driving forces, although it puts on nationalist and other dresses.

Indian freedom is necessary because the burden on the Indian masses as well as the middle classes is too heavy to be borne and must be lightened or done away with. The measure of freedom is the extent to which this burden is removed. This burden is due to the vested interests of a foreign government as well as those of certain groups and classes in India and abroad. The achievement of freedom thus becomes a question, as Gandhiji said recently, of divesting vested interests.<sup>8</sup> If an indigenous government took the place of the foreign government and kept all the vested interests intact, this would not even be the shadow of freedom.

We have got into an extraordinary habit of thinking of freedom in terms of paper constitutions. Nothing could be more absurd than this lawyer's mentality which ignores life and the vital economic issues and can only proceed on the basis of the *status quo* and precedents. Too much reliance on past practice has somehow succeeded in twisting the lawyer's head backwards and he seems to be incapable of looking ahead. Even the halt and the lame go slowly forward; not so the lawyer who is convinced, like the fanatic in religion, that truth can only lie in the past.

The Round Table scheme is almost as dead as Queen Anne and hardly deserves notice. It was not meant to give an iota of freedom to the Indian people; it sought to win over certain Indian vested interests to the British side and in this it succeeded. It answered, to the satisfaction of its votaries, the question I had formulated at the beginning of this essay: whose freedom are we striving for? It gave greater protection and assurance and freedom to the British vested interests in India. It was Home Rule for the Viceroy as Mr. Vithalbhai Patel said. It confirmed the interests of British capital and British services and, in some cases, gave them even more than they have now. It tried to perpetuate the alien military occupation of India. Further, it gave greater freedom and importance to the vested interests of the princes and the semi-feudal magnates. In brief, the whole scheme was meant for the protection and perpetuation of the numerous vested interests that exploit the Indian masses. Having done this useful and, to themselves, profitable piece of work, the originators of the scheme

8. In his letter of 14 September 1933, Mahatma Gandhi wrote to Jawaharlal, "I am also in whole-hearted agreement with you, when you say that without a material revision of the vested interests the condition of the masses can never be improved."



told us that autonomy was a costly affair and would mean the expenditure of many millions for each province! Thus not only were all the old burdens on the masses to be continued but many new ones were to be added. This was the ingenious solution discovered by the wise and learned men who foregathered at the Round Table Conference. Intent on protecting their class privileges they happened to forget an odd three hundred and fifty million people in India.

Even a child in politics can point out the folly of this procedure. The whole basis and urge of the national movement came from a desire for economic betterment, to throw off the burdens that crushed the masses and to end the exploitation of the Indian people. If these burdens continue and are actually added to, it does not require a powerful mind to realise that the fight must not only continue but grow more intense. Leaders and individuals may come and go; and they may get tired and slacken off; they may compromise or betray; but the exploited and suffering masses must carry on the struggle for their drill-sergeant is hunger. Swaraj or freedom from exploitation for them is not a fine paper constitution or a problem of the hereafter. It is a question of the here and now, of immediate relief. Roast lamb and mint sauce may be a tasty dish for those who eat it but the poor lamb is not likely to appreciate the force of the best of arguments which point out the beauty of sacrifice for the good of the elect and the joys of close communion, even though dead, with mint sauce.

India's immediate goal can therefore only be considered in terms of the ending of exploitation of her people. Politically, it must mean independence and the severance of the British connection, which means imperialist dominion; economically and socially it must mean the ending of all special class privileges and vested interests. The whole world is struggling to this end; India can do no less, and in this way the Indian struggle for freedom lines up with the world struggle. Is our aim human welfare or the preservation of class privileges and the vested interests of pampered groups? The question must be answered clearly and unequivocally by each one of us. There is no room for quibbling when the fate of nations and millions of human beings is at stake. The day for palace intrigues and parlour politics and pacts and compromises passes when the masses enter politics. Their manners are not those of the drawing room; we never took the trouble to teach them any manners. Their school is the school of events and suffering is their teacher. They learn their politics from great movements which bring out the true nature of individuals and classes, and the civil disobedience movement has taught the Indian masses many a lesson which they will never forget.



Independence is a much abused word and it hardly connotes what we are driving at. And yet there is no other suitable word and, for want of a better, we must use it. National isolation is neither a desirable nor a possible idea in a world which is daily becoming more of a unit. International and intra-national activities dominate the world and nations are growing more and more interdependent. Our ideal and objective cannot go against this historical tendency and we must be prepared to discard a narrow nationalism in favour of world cooperation and real internationalism. Independence therefore cannot mean for us isolation but freedom from all imperialist control, and because Britain today represents imperialism, our freedom can only come after the British connection is severed. We have no quarrel with the British people, but between British imperialism and Indian freedom there is no meeting ground and there can be no peace. If imperialism goes from Britain we shall gladly cooperate with her in the wider international field; not otherwise.

British statesmen of the Liberal and Labour variety often point out to us the ills of a narrow nationalism and dwell on the virtues of what used to be known as the British Empire and is now euphemistically called the British Commonwealth of Nations. Under cover of fine and radical words and phrases they seek to hide the ugly and brutal face of imperialism and try to keep us in its embrace of death. Some Indian public men, who ought to know better, also praise the virtues of internationalism, meaning thereby the British Empire, and tell us in sorrow how narrow-minded we are in demanding independence, in place of that wonderful thing (which nobody offers us) Dominion Status. The British, it is well known, have a remarkable capacity for combining their moral instincts with their self-interest. That is perhaps not unnatural, but it is remarkable how some of our own countrymen are taken in by this unctuous and hypocritical attitude. Even the light of day is wasted on those who keep their eyes shut. It is worth noting however that the foreign policy of England has been the greatest stumbling block to international cooperation through the League of Nations or otherwise. All the European and American world knows this but most of us, who look at foreign politics through English spectacles, have not grasped this fact yet. Disarmament, air-bombing, the attitude to the Manchurian question,<sup>9</sup> are some of the recent

9. Japanese troops, guarding the South Manchurian Railway in accordance with treaty rights, used an explosion on the railway as an excuse for seizing the city of Mukden (18 September 1931). Within five months, despite the condemnation of the Great Powers and in defiance of the League of Nations, the Japanese had established control over the whole of Manchuria.

witnesses to England's attitude. Even the Kellogg-Briand Pact of Paris, which was to have outlawed war, was only accepted by England subject to certain qualifications and reservations regarding her empire, which effectively nullified the pact. The British Empire and real internationalism are as the poles apart and it is not through that empire that we can march to internationalism.

The real question before us, and before the whole world, is one of fundamental change of regime, politically, economically, socially. Only thus can we put India on the road to progress and stop the progressive deterioration of our country. In a revolutionary period, such as exists in the world today, it is foolish waste of energy to think and act in terms of carrying on the existing regime and trying to reform it and improve it. To do so is to waste the opportunity which history offers once in a long while. "The whole world is in revolution" says Mussolini. "Events themselves are a tremendous force pushing us on like some implacable will." Individuals, however eminent, play but a minor role when the world is on the move. They may divert the main current here and there to some slight extent; they may not and cannot stop the rushing torrent. And therefore the only peace that can endure is with circumstances, not merely with men.

Whither India? Surely to the great human goal of social and economic equality, to the ending of all exploitation of nation by nation and class by class, to national freedom within the framework of an international cooperative socialist world federation. This is not such an empty idealist dream as some people imagine. It is within the range of the practical politics of today and the near future. We may not have it within our grasp but those with vision can see it emerging on the horizon. And even if there be delay in the realisation of our goal, what does it matter if our steps march in the right direction and our eyes look steadily in front. For in the pursuit itself of a mighty purpose there is joy and happiness and a measure of achievement. As Bernard Shaw has said: "This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of nature, instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."



2. To Charles Mascarenhas<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

November 10, 1933

Dear Comrade,<sup>2</sup>

I have just received your letter. I would gladly have agreed to your publication of my articles entitled *Whither India?* But I have already given the publication rights to a firm here and they have issued them in pamphlet form. These articles are also coming out very soon in Hindi and Urdu and, a little later, probably in Bengali and Marathi. If you would care to bring them out in Gujarati you can do so.

I am sending you two copies of the pamphlet. Should you desire more, please communicate with Kitabistan, City Road, Allahabad. If you wish to have any considerable number of copies some special terms could be arranged with Kitabistan.

It was my desire to write some more articles partly to answer criticism and partly to continue the argument but I have had no time so far. Perhaps I may do so yet. But criticism on the whole has been singularly pointless. On the one side there is the purely nationalist criticism which does not even try to understand the argument; on the other side it is pointed out that I do not go far enough and that I avoid the implications of what I say. Further I am personally denounced for my contradictions. The critics forget that I write for an audience which is not used to these ideas and to technical terms. Further that I have to carry the audience and not merely to make a brave show. No doubt it is easy to find contradictions and most of us grow and develop their ideas. But many of my so-called contradictions are due to my dual capacity—the personal one in which I say exactly as I feel and the second one as General Secretary of the Congress. In the latter capacity I can at most express opinions which are not in conflict with Congress resolutions. I have felt and I still feel that it is worthwhile to carry the Congress as far as it will go. A time may come, sooner rather than later, when the new ideas may cause a split in the Congress. When that comes it will be faced. But till then I see no reason why I should isolate myself from the

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. A follower of M.N. Roy; founder-member of the Congress Socialist Party; expelled from the party in 1937 along with other supporters of Roy.

Congress and leave the organisation which has so much influence over people's minds in India to other people with a reactionary outlook.

With all good wishes for your work,

Yours fraternally,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### 3. Some Criticisms Considered<sup>1</sup>

My articles entitled *Whither India?* have had a mixed welcome. But they have amply justified the labour spent on them for they have directed the public mind to certain basic problems which are seldom considered in India, and have perhaps made some people think on novel lines. There have been two types of criticisms: the left criticism which accepted the main line of thought but said that it did not go far enough, and the right criticism which attacked the very premises of my argument and rejected with anger my conclusions. On both sides the personal element was brought in and my seeming contradictions and weaknesses were pointed out.

I had attempted to deal with the problem as impersonally and objectively as it was possible for me and I had hoped that it would be so considered. Personalities count in politics but they should not intrude themselves when world problems and world forces are analysed and a meaning is sought to be drawn from them. It is therefore desirable that my many failings and deficiencies might be forgotten for a while for they do not affect these problems. Personally I am not conscious of any glaring inconsistencies in my ideas or activities during the last thirteen years or so but no doubt I am a partial observer. It is perfectly true that I have grown mentally during this period and many a vague idea has taken shape and many a doubt has been removed. It is also true that as an active politician, having to face day to day problems, I have sometimes had to make compromises with life and the conditions that I found existing at a particular moment. But even

1. Published in the Indian press, 21 November 1933.



so I am not aware of any betrayal of the ideal that drew me on or the principles I held.

I have not seen all the criticisms of my articles and even those that I have seen are too many to be dealt with here. I shall therefore confine my reply to two lengthy and anonymous criticisms—one by “G” which appeared in a number of newspapers in northern India<sup>2</sup> and the other entitled “Into the Pit...” which was published by *The Pioneer*. Both these deal with the problem from the extreme “right” point of view. I have already replied separately to the “left” criticism. Reading these two anonymous articles, I marvelled at the extreme ignorance of the writers of the accepted commonplaces of history and economics and modern thought, and the amazing confusion that existed in their heads. I am not vain enough to imagine that I shall succeed in illumining the dark corners of their brains or make them understand the most obvious and elementary facts. But I should like to inform them that there was nothing novel in my survey of history and present-day conditions, although to them it might have appeared strange enough; it was a repetition of what practically every thinker and intelligent writer of today says. The conclusions drawn from this survey might differ, but the facts themselves are beyond dispute for all except those who have a horror of facts or an incapacity or unwillingness to see straight. *The Statesman* is no friend of communism or socialism. It has given me fair warning that if I carry on in the way I am doing I shall have to be suppressed.<sup>3</sup> And yet *The Statesman* said, after reading the first two of my articles: “With the Pandit’s analysis of the problem we are largely in agreement, indeed substantially the same picture has often been presented in these columns.” When, however, *The Statesman* saw my third article, in which an attempt was made to apply the conclusions it had largely accepted to India, it drew away in fear and anger.

I have been told that the “programme” I had laid down in my articles was wanting in clarity and details. As a matter of fact I had

2. ‘G’ in his criticism of 19 October 1933 questioned the very idea of classifying the people into two classes viz., ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ and the methods adopted to remove the disparities between the two. He contended that there were no conflicts among the classes, upper and lower middle class, zamindars and peasants; and the very thought of the existence of such conflicts was an illusion.
3. On 13 October 1933 *The Statesman* commented: “He preaches the class war and the necessity of divesting them... We may be quite sure that the propertied classes will be no more reconciled.... Once it is realised that a communist revolution is afoot, the answer to attempted revolution is always suppression by force.”



laid down no programme at all, much less a detailed programme, although a certain programme would follow inevitably if my premises and argument were correct. I had merely endeavoured to trace the course of the historical development of capitalism and to point out how economic forces were dominating and changing the world. Both the criticisms I am dealing with have ignored this and have branched off into wholly irrelevant questions. What has the Gandhi-Irwin Pact to do with the subject I was considering? Soviet Russia, like King Charles' head, also seems to have become an obsession with the two anonymous critics and this nightmare has, I am afraid, seriously diminished their capacity for clear thought.

I have not defined "capitalist" or "capitalism", I am told, and, mortal sin, I have assumed the existence of British imperialism without proving it! I plead guilty to the charge and await sentence. Science is a revolutionary product (I agree) and must be avoided, and is not today's magic tomorrow's science? In any event my science is nescience leading straight "to a Soviet hell". "Into the Pit..." of this close reasoning let us for the moment leave the author of this rigma-role.

But "G" runs him close. In a "scientific" world we are told "the wife may be regarded as sheer luxury." History has been ransacked by him to show that "no example could be produced to prove that the lot of the masses has ever been improved by violent means." It would be interesting to find out where "G" derived his knowledge of history. Then we are given an insight into European politics by being told that Germany and Italy have adopted Bolshevik methods. We await enlightenment as to what these methods are. But to judge of the efficacy of these methods we must wait for another hundred years! It is some comfort to know that we are in a position to judge the effects of the French Revolution now.

It is a little difficult to say much about this ignorant jumble of crude ideas and prejudices. But we can draw this conclusion from it that when interests are at stake the mind and the intellect are forced into the background and passions hold the field. "There is nothing so passionate," says Yeats,<sup>4</sup> the Irish poet, "as a vested interest disguised as an intellectual conviction."

When the word "capitalism" is used intelligently it can mean only one thing: the economic system that has developed since the Industrial Revolution which began in England a century and half ago. It

4. William Butler Yeats (1865-1939); poet of Irish nationalism who was greatly influenced by Indian thought; friend of Rabindranath Tagore.



means industrial capitalism. To give a recent definition (by G.D.H. Cole<sup>5</sup>): Capitalism means the developed system of production for profit based on private ownership of the means of production. It makes fundamentally for scarcity and not abundance, though the capitalist is often led to seek ways of cheapening individual products. For it the making of profit is the end of production, and it necessarily treats wages as a cost to be kept down as low as possible, and therefore tends to restrict mass purchasing power.

It is this system that we have to consider and not the merits of individual capitalists, some of whom according to "G", are even prepared to make a big sacrifice, but with a proviso attached. I endeavoured very briefly to trace in my previous articles the growth and decline of this system and to point out that it was breaking up today. This process of disruption, owing to economic causes, has nothing to do with the goodness or otherwise of capitalists or our own wishes in the matter. If the diagnosis is correct then the disease must have a speedy and a fatal end, however much some of us might desire a continuation of the present system.

The anonymous gentleman (or is it a lady?) from the 'Pit' appears to think that the French Revolution and the Russian Bolshevik Revolution were the same kind of phenomena and represent an identical or similar conflict between social forces. There could be no greater error. The French Revolution was a continuation on a more thorough and far-reaching scale of the English Revolution which cost Charles I his head and James II his crown, and which brought the middle classes to the seats of power. These middle class revolutions largely ended the feudal period when political power was an inherited privilege.

In England the process was not as thorough as in France and hence relics of feudalism still linger in England and there are more class distinctions, in England today than in almost any country of Europe or America. Napoleon carried on the work of the French Revolution and was instrumental in establishing the capitalist middle class regime all over western Europe. The whole of 19th century civilisation in Europe was based on the ideology of the French Revolution. This ideology in its turn derived from the ideas of Montesquieu, Voltaire,<sup>6</sup> Rousseau<sup>7</sup>

5. (1889-1959); British economist and social theorist; member of the Labour Party; wrote a large number of books including *History of Socialist Thought* in six volumes.

6. (1694-1778); the great French philosopher and author of *Candide*.

7. Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778); author of *Social Contract*.

and the Encyclopaedists<sup>8</sup>, that is to say from the period before the Industrial Revolution. This ideology, with its slogan of political liberty, equality and fraternity, became completely out of date with the growth of industrial capitalism.

Political liberty brought the vote but it was gradually discovered that this was of little use when there was so much economic inequality. A starving man could do little with his vote and could be easily coerced and exploited. This gave rise to new theories and ideas based on the economic relations of various groups, and socialism saw the light of day. A vague and idealistic socialism developed later into the scientific socialism of Karl Marx. The Russian Revolution was the direct product and justification of the Marxist theory—the first revolution of March 1917 being a middle class turn-over, the second one, in November 1917, a proletarian victory.

The French Revolution was based on the idea of the sacredness of private property. The writer in *The Pioneer* does not seem to approve of the *sans-culottes*.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps it will surprise him to learn that they fought for the Declaration of the Rights of Man which in Article 17 declared: "*La propriété étant un droit inviolable et sacré, nul ne peut être privé de ses propriétés...*"<sup>10</sup>

It became evident, however, during the 19th century, that a theoretical equality before the law or the possession of a vote did not bring real equality. Economic inequality, the maldistribution of wealth, which capitalism progressively increased, made equality impossible of attainment; and exploitation of man by man and group by group increased. Thinkers therefore came to the conclusion that economic equality should be aimed at and at the root of this was the control of the means of production by society as a whole and the severe restriction of private property.

No one has said, as *The Pioneer* article seems to imagine, that all men are physically or mentally equal, or that all nations are similarly situated. What has been said, and what is admitted by the great majority of intelligent men, is that all human beings should have an

8. The authors of the *French Encyclopaedia* edited by Diderot and published during 1751-1772. They included Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Quesnay, D'Alembert and others.

9. Term applied to the lower classes in France during the French Revolution. (The name derived from the fact that these people wore long trousers instead of knee breeches—*culottes*).

10. Property being an inviolable and sacred right, no one can be deprived of his property.



equality of opportunity. The present capitalist system does not and cannot in the nature of things provide this equality of opportunity.

The famous 19th century saying about "government of the people, by the people and for the people" failed to materialise in practice because under the capitalist system the government was neither by the people nor for the people. It was a government by the possessing classes for their own benefit. The people, according to them, were themselves; all others were in the outer darkness. A real government by the people and for the people can only be established when the masses hold power, that is under socialism when all the people really share in the government and the wealth of the country.

*The Pioneer* writer informs us that if the State becomes the sole capitalist then the lot of the workers will be worst of all because the State will exploit them mercilessly. This is a remarkable argument. What is the State under socialism and who benefits by the exploitation? If the people as a whole choose to exploit themselves they are perfectly welcome to do so, but even so the benefits go to them as a whole and not to selected groups or individuals.

Where will the surplus go, he further asks in an agony of apprehension? He cannot get out of the old rut of thinking along the lines of the capitalist economics of scarcity. There will be no surplus in a properly ordered and planned society and whatever is produced will go towards raising the standard of living of the people. Certainly, a man should be allowed the fruits of his labour. It is because these fruits are forcibly taken away from him under the capitalist system that we object to that system. Only under socialism will he have the full enjoyment of these fruits of his toil.

It is perfectly true that there can be no perfect freedom for an individual or nation when there is cooperation or interdependence with others. Every form of social life involves a restriction of individual freedom. But it is the merest quibbling to say that there can be no such thing as national freedom within the framework of an international socialist federation. When a measure of national freedom is given up willingly for the purposes of international cooperation this is not usually considered as a loss of freedom for the individual or the group. Is Wales less free because it forms part of Great Britain?

"G" tells us that the "very idea that the interests of the upper and middle classes conflict with those of the peasantry and the workers seems to be untenable." And yet, strange to say, this untenable idea is held by almost every thinker or intelligent person in the West where a great deal of thought has been given to this subject. If he will study a little history or any modern book on the subject it may help him to



clear up his ideas. Or it might even be helpful to visit a factory to find out what the owners and the workers think about each other's interests.

Both the critics seem to be greatly interested in my views on non-violence. Am I for coercion or conversion? "G" seems to thunder out, and he tells me, quoting Gandhiji as his authority, that the method alone is the deciding factor. I was not aware that Gandhiji had made any such one-sided statement although he has always laid stress on the methods to be employed.

None of these questions arise from my articles for I had dealt only with a historical process and the ideal to be aimed at. I had not referred to any methods. But it is desirable none the less to answer the questions.

However important the method may be I entirely fail to understand how it can take the place of the objective. It is essential to have the objective and know the direction before a single step can be taken. As for the method, I might clear the ground by saying that, so far as I am concerned, it does not consist of preaching religion or philanthropy. I have no use for either and I have often found that they cover the rankest hypocrisy and selfishness. I certainly believe in ethics and morality and truthfulness and many other virtues but my belief in them does not turn them into methods; they can only be attributes of a method.

Coercion or conversion? What is the whole principle of the State based on? And the present social system? Is not coercion and enforced conformity the very basis of both? Army, police, laws, prisons, taxes are all methods of coercion. The zamindar who realises rent and often many illegal cesses relies on coercion, not on conversion of the tenant. The factory owner who gives starvation wages does not rely on conversion. Hunger and the organised forces of the State are the coercive processes employed by both. Is a lock-out or an attempt to reduce wages a method of conversion? It is well to realise that those who belong to the favoured and possessing classes retain these positions by methods of coercion alone and it does not lie in their mouths to talk of conversion. The principal moral argument against the present system and in favour of socialism is that the latter reduces the element of coercion and will, it is hoped, ultimately do away with it altogether.

How are we to change over to a new system based on cooperation? And how are we to divest vested interests? We are told by *The Pioneer* writer, and I think rightly, that the capitalist will not "tamely submit to be robbed of his wealth, or vested interests tamely submit to be divested." History also shows us that there is no instance of a privileged



class or group or nation giving up its special privileges or interests willingly. Individuals have done so often enough but not a group. Always a measure of coercion has been applied, pressure has been brought to bear, or conditions have been created which make it impossible or unprofitable for vested interests to carry on. And then the enforced conversion takes place. The methods of this enforcement may be brutal or civilized.

I have no doubt that coercion or pressure is necessary to bring about political and social change in India. Indeed our nonviolent mass movements of the past thirteen years have been powerful weapons to exercise this pressure. Undoubtedly they convert stray individuals from the opposing group and partly weaken the resistance of that group by removing the moral justification for domination and repression. But essentially they are processes to coerce the opposing nation or group.

It is perfectly true that this method of coercion is the most civilized and moral method and it avoids as far as possible the unpleasant reactions and consequences of violence. I think that it does offer a moral equivalent for violent warfare and, if civilization does not collapse, it will gradually adopt this peaceful method of settling its disputes. But it seems to me a fact that cannot be disputed or challenged that a nonviolent mass struggle coerces and is meant to coerce the other party. The boycott of goods is an obvious instance.

Personally I have accepted the nonviolent method because not only did it appeal to me in theory but it seemed to be peculiarly suited to present conditions in India. That belief has grown in me. But I have made it clear on many occasions that nonviolence is no infallible creed with me and although I greatly prefer it to violence, I prefer freedom with violence to subjection with nonviolence. That choice does not arise for me today because I believe that for a long time to come our most effective methods must be nonviolent. I might add that I do not look upon nonviolent noncooperation or civil disobedience as a negative and passive method, a kind of pious and static pacifism, but as an active, dynamic and forceful method of enforcing the mass will.

The question of violence or nonviolence may arise, and indeed is bound to arise, in another form after the conquest of the State power. There may be attempts to upset the new form of government by reactionary groups. Will "G" advise the new government to use the resources of the State to coerce these elements into submission or does he think that the religious and philanthropic argument should be used to convert them? Then again the new government may pass laws, which, carrying out the will of the great majority of the people, seek to divest privileged groups. Will "G" then advise these groups to



submit to the majority opinion or to resist, and if the latter, how should their resistance be met?

There is one other subject on which I should like to touch and that is khaddar. I believe in industrialisation and the big machine and I should like to see factories spring up all over India. I want to increase the wealth of India and the standards of living of the Indian people and it seems to me that this can only be done by the application of science to industry resulting in large scale industrialisation. Quite apart from my own desires, I think that present-day conditions are bound to result in the progressive industrialisation of the country. And yet I support hand-spinning and khaddar under existing conditions in India.

For me this has today an economic, a political and a social value. It fits in with the present peasant structure, brings them some relief and makes them self-reliant. It helps to bring us into touch with the peasant masses and to organise them to some extent. It is an effective political weapon in that it helps in the boycott of foreign cloth, and at the same time it acts as some check on the Indian mills, preventing them raising their prices too much. During the Great War foreign imports of cloth fell greatly and there was a cloth famine. Indian mill owners made vast profits by raising their prices and exploiting this more or less protected market. They will no doubt exploit every such opportunity.

But khaddar can now fill the gap during times of crisis and prevent this exploitation to a large extent. There can be no doubt that khaddar has justified itself in some ways. At the same time it is equally true that it is an out-of-date form of production and it will not be possible, through it, to increase the wealth of the country greatly or raise the standard of living of the masses. Therefore, I think that the big machine must come and I am sure that khaddar will not prevent its coming. It may be that the big machine itself gets decentralised to a large extent in the course of the next few years. The enormous growth in the use of electric power has revolutionised world industry during the last thirty years and it will no doubt revolutionise it still further.

In conclusion may I assure the writer in *The Pioneer* that I have not the least desire to get England strafed. I have too much regard for many of the fine things that England has stood for to nurse any such wish and I believe that the great majority of the English people are themselves exploited by small groups. But I do believe that natural laws will speedily put an end to the British Empire and imperialism and capitalism and I wish to help in the process.



#### 4. Further Criticisms Considered<sup>1</sup>

Some time back the *Advocate* of Bombay did me the honour of criticising my articles entitled *Whither India?* as well as some other statements of mine. I was unfortunately fully engaged at the time and could not explain my position further. But the criticisms have a certain wider importance and it is perhaps worthwhile to deal with some of them even at this late stage.

To begin with, it is well to bear in mind that news agencies and newspapers are functioning today in a peculiar way and live in continual fear of government displeasure. They seldom publish all the news sent to them and it is very unsafe to pass judgment on the incomplete data provided by them. To give an instance: the *Advocate* criticised me for not giving a clear opinion on what is called 'individual civil disobedience' and inferred, from an incomplete press account, that last month's conference of U.P. Congress workers held at Allahabad avoided this delicate subject. As a matter of fact I have expressed my opinion in favour of such civil disobedience clearly and rather aggressively in a number of public statements, and the Allahabad conference passed a detailed resolution on the subject also favouring individual civil disobedience and advising workers how to do it. This resolution (which was subsequently published in the *Advocate*) was quietly ignored by the news agencies and most newspapers.

Under the present circumstances I am wholly opposed to a withdrawal of civil disobedience because this inevitably means liquidating our present struggle and turning mass attention to some form of compromise with British imperialism. I think that under present conditions in India and the world this would be a betrayal of the cause. Small groups here and there who talk in terms of an advanced ideology will have little, if any, effect on the mass demoralization which will be produced by our abandoning the civil disobedience movement. We would then drift away from the current of world change, which grows more powerful day by day, and settle down in a stagnant backwater. The opportunities that may come our way will find us lacking and unprepared.

1. Published in the Indian press, 27 November 1933.

Even from the point of view of consolidating and preparing our organizations and position for a mass struggle, it seems to me to be folly to expect that a withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement will give us this opportunity, unless this consolidation means parlour talk and no action. Surely, the government will not willingly give us a chance of building up our strength and will pick out all our active and effective workers and try to disable them. This process of individual disablement, added to the loss of morale involved in a giving up of the present struggle, must result in utter mass demoralization and an inability to do anything effective for a considerable time. It is far easier to build up and consolidate our position and develop an ideology in course of a struggle than in the demoralized condition that follows an ending of it. Events teach the masses more than individual effort, and a struggle, whether national or social, produces these mighty teachers. But, of course, there must be right direction.

I am quite sure that the only alternative to a continuation of our present struggle is some measure of cooperation with imperialism. Individuals and groups here and there may talk bravely, but their talk will end in empty nothing so far as mass action is concerned. Personally I am not prepared, and there are many who think like me, for any such compromise, whatever happens. It is better for the cause, I am convinced, that we should carry on the fight and even be crushed to atoms—rather than that we should compromise with imperialism. But we have no intention of being crushed.

An ideology is presumed to lead to action and action on a mass scale. If such action is meant for the whole of India, the ideology cannot (except as the ultimate aim) ignore present-day objective facts and conditions all over the country. The question each one of us has to answer is this: Are we to prepare for some distant future struggle for a problematic freedom in the hereafter, or do we consider that objective conditions in the country and the world are such that the struggle is here and now, or in the near future, and we have to face it. If we adopt the latter answer, as I think we must, then we must carry on the struggle and try to shape it and try to develop a new ideology through it and in the course of it.

World events of the past decade or more have many lessons to teach us. There is the pitiful and miserable failure of social democracy in England, Germany and other countries. There is also failure to make good or to rouse the masses, in spite of suitable economic conditions, of the communist parties of various countries (excluding the Soviet Union). In most countries communism is represented by three or four different groups or parties, each cursing and slandering the



other, wholly incapable of united action, and often forgetting the common foe in their mutual hatreds. It is perfectly clear that, however correct the ideology of the Communist International may have been, their tactics have failed.

In India we see, during the past thirteen years, a subservient and demoralized people, incapable of any action and much less united action, suddenly develop backbone and power of resistance and an amazing capacity for united action, and challenge the might of a great and entrenched empire. Is this a little thing that we have achieved? Or is it not one of the most remarkable examples of mass regeneration? And are we not entitled to claim that the methods that brought about this great change were worthy and desirable methods? Those who criticise these methods might well compare the achievement of India during these years with that of any other colonial and semi-colonial country. They might also compare the achievements of others in India trying to work differently or with a braver ideology.

It would be a good thing if some of our critics made a grand tour of India from the Khyber Pass in the north to the south and the east and the west and studied the situation for themselves. They would find that the Congress is not only not defunct, but is very much alive and functioning in many areas, and is going to function despite anything that might happen. They would discover the strange ferment in the peasantry and the new temper of the army. One is a little apt to misjudge India by conditions prevailing in a city, especially when our newspapers do not even publish the news. How many people know of the recent extraordinary happenings in the Frontier Province? Or of the fact that many hundreds of people have gone to prison in Behar alone during the last two months or so? Or of the stream of individuals that are offering civil disobedience in other provinces? Or of the *Sarkar Salaam*<sup>2</sup> and other barbarities that are taking place in Bengal? I could add to the list. The mere fact that these amazing methods of repression are being resorted to still is proof enough of the strength of our movement and the nervous and fearful state of the government. Why should it resort to these extraordinary methods if it felt that there was no life left in our movement?

I have been told that I stand for a federation with the princes and feudal lords without in any way questioning their despotism. This is a somewhat remarkable interpretation of what I have said. Certainly I think that a federation is likely to be established in India that is

2. In Hijli jail political prisoners had to carry heavy bar fetters for refusing to salute the superintendent of police.

to be, but I cannot conceive of any stable federation, certainly not one to which I can agree, to which the feudal chiefs are parties. I believe that the whole Indian state system must go root and branch.

Probably reference was made to the Delhi Provisional Settlement of 1931. A federation was certainly agreed to there, but the nature of it was not defined. In any event the Delhi Settlement is no more. The government has put an end to it and we are no longer bound by its terms.

It might be as well to remember that I am not the Congress and the Congress is not Jawaharlal Nehru. It has been my great privilege to work in the Congress for the best years of my life and perhaps sometimes I have had a little influence over its decisions. But I am not presumptuous enough to imagine that I can carry the Congress with me wherever I will; I have long felt that the Congress is far the most effective radical organization in the country and it is easier to work great changes in the mass mentality through it rather than through any other means. So long as I feel that, I shall gladly and most willingly work with this great organization, which has done so much for the country, even though it may not go far enough from my point of view. And so long as that is the case no question can arise of my thinking of another organization.

I have been told that the breaking of laws fundamentally implies a defence of the breaker. I am afraid I am unable to grasp the significance of this statement. But I am certainly of opinion that a general strike involving a paralysis of the transport and other machinery of the forces of oppression is a powerful weapon which should be prepared for and used when the time for it is ripe.

The *Advocate* has criticised me for not convening a meeting of the A.I.C.C. May I point out that I have repeatedly stated that I am perfectly willing to convene it if some members requisition it? It is only necessary for about eight per cent of the members to send a requisition and I am fully prepared to waive any technicalities in their favour. If not even eight per cent demand it, does the fault lie with me? As a matter of fact, in spite of newspaper statements and criticism, hardly a single member has written to me formally about it. Personally I am well content with the programme of action before us and I feel that it enables those of us who wish to do so to carry on work. It is the business of those who are dissatisfied or those who want a change in programme to ask for an A.I.C.C. meeting, instead of hurling vague criticisms in the air. If this demand is not made even by these people, is it not a legitimate inference that the great majority of Congressmen do not desire a change of programme?



People forget sometimes that we are functioning abnormally. They discuss the constitutional issue in terms of normality or they criticise the Congress for its seeming inactivity, forgetting that the Congress has arrived at a certain stage of historical growth. It is not at present a constitutional or legal body and many of the safe and brave deeds that are performed on public platforms are no longer in its line. Constitutionlists naturally dislike this; they cannot function in an illegal atmosphere. But why should those who think in terms of revolutionary change object to this inevitable and desirable development?

This article has grown long, but I have not yet dealt with many other points that have been raised. I hope to come back to them, and especially to the questions of nonviolence and khaddar, in a subsequent article.

## 5. To the Editor, The Pioneer<sup>1</sup>

Sir,

To controversy on current public issues there is no end, but perhaps you will permit me to say something to elucidate certain points raised by you in today's leading article.<sup>2</sup>

To do away with the class division of society necessarily implies the ending of the caste system which is only a petrified form of class division. It is obvious therefore that I am for the ending of the caste system. So far as religion is concerned I am for complete freedom of conscience and religious belief. Each individual should be perfectly free to believe in and follow any religion, and those who are not religiously inclined should also be free to spread their ideas. But religion should be a personal affair and must not interfere in political or economic questions.

I regret to say that I have not so far read either G.D.H. Cole's *Intelligent Man's Guide Through World Chaos* or Strachey's *Menace of Fascism*, though I hope to do so as soon as I have the opportunity.

1. *The Pioneer*, 23 November 1933.
2. The editorial claimed that most of Jawaharlal's views in *Whither India?* were second-hand and taken from volumes which are "among the sacred books of the Bloomsbury intellectuals or 'Parlour Bolsheviks'" and, on Jawaharlal's own confession, "laid down no programme at all much less a detailed programme," still less answered such questions as how he proposed to secure "social equality" without abolition of caste.

But of course I have read many similar books and my ideas are, as you have pertinently observed, largely second-hand. I claimed no originality for them. Indeed I tried to lay stress on the fact that they were commonplaces in intelligent circles.

My point was that the capitalist system was collapsing because of its inherent contradictions and world conditions. Undoubtedly the World War has hastened this process but the war itself was an inevitable consequence of capitalism and imperialism. It is quite possible that another world war will put the finishing touches to the work of the last war and finally end the capitalistic system. The fact remains and, I submit, cannot be challenged that, whatever form the new social order might take, the capitalist order is doomed. Any further argument must proceed on this assumption.

As to what the new order is going to be or should be we may differ. I think it will be the socialist order. To my knowledge no other consistent theory has so far been suggested (if we may ignore Major Douglas, the technocrats and some others whose schemes are sufficiently revolutionary). But socialism does not mean just a duplication of what has taken place in Soviet Russia. It may, and probably will, evolve on different lines in different countries. It must always be remembered that Czarist Russia was one of the worst places to try the socialist experiment because of her backward condition. An advanced industrial country like England or Germany would have been far more suitable and would have yielded swifter and richer results. It is easy enough to criticise Russia. In a vast country launched on a vast and unprecedented experiment there are bound to be innumerable lapses and even failure. But the point is that in Russia these lapses and failures are recognised and an immediate effort is made to remedy them. In the capitalist countries, on the other hand, there is a helpless wringing of hands and a policy of waiting and seeing, for every avenue of growth and every effective remedy leads to a change of the system.

I do not admire all that has occurred in the Soviet Union but I do admire their objective and the vital urge that is driving them to it. I think also that in spite of many mistakes and failures the Soviets have an amazing amount of success to their credit.

My programme? The objective is political independence for India and a rapid social change to establish a socialist state. The method of action and exercising pressure is at present chiefly civil disobedience, and I invite you, Sir, and your readers to participate in this.

Yours etc.,  
Jawaharlal Nehru



## OUT OF PRISON

1. Exploitation of India<sup>1</sup>

It is not easy to write briefly on the Indian situation for the information of the British public. Partisan and one-sided propaganda has held the field there for so long that every vital issue has been confused and a totally false impression created of conditions in India. Even in India, during the last three or four years, ordinance rule, which is close cousin to martial law under certain legal forms, and a rigid censorship of the press have suppressed not only expressions of opinion but even news that was acceptable to the British authorities in India. The newspaper press is bound hand and foot, public meetings on political issues are not allowed to be held, books and pamphlets, even those giving admitted facts, are proscribed, letters and telegrams are censored and sometimes do not reach their destination. It is an offence in many parts of the country to publish the names or photographs of people arrested under the Ordinances. Some months back even a memorial meeting on the anniversary of the death of Pandit Mahatma Nehru was banned though it was convened largely by non-Congressmen and a peaceful moderate like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was to have presided over it. In some parts of Bengal and in the Frontier Province there is a military occupation and an interference with the day-to-day activities of every citizen which is far severer than if the country had been invaded by a foreign army during war time. Even children in Chittagong and Minnowpore have to carry about cards of identity. The movements of people are strictly regulated, even their dress has to conform to official regulations, and heavy fines are imposed on whole towns and villages to

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Herald* (London), 2 October 1934, later reprinted under the title *The Indian Struggle for Freedom in Recent Events and Writings*, (Allahabad, 1934), pp. 113-120.





## THE CONGRESS PROGRAMME

### 1. Exploitation of India<sup>1</sup>

It is not easy to write briefly on the Indian situation for the information of the British public. Partisan and one-sided propaganda has held the field there for so long that every vital issue has been confused and a totally false impression created of conditions in India. Even in India, during the last three or four years, ordinance rule, which is close cousin to martial law under certain legal forms, and a rigid censorship of the press have suppressed not only expressions of opinion but even news that was unpalatable to the British authorities in India. The newspaper press is bound hand and foot, public meetings on political issues are not allowed to be held, books and pamphlets, even those giving admitted facts, are proscribed, letters and telegrams are censored and sometimes do not reach their destination. It is an offence in many parts of the country to publish the names or photographs of people arrested under the ordinances. Some months back even a memorial meeting on the anniversary of the death of Pandit Motilal Nehru was banned though it was convened largely by non-Congressmen and a peaceful moderate like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was to have presided over it. In some parts of Bengal and in the Frontier Province there is a military occupation and an interference with the day to day activities of every citizen which is far severer than if the country had been invaded by a foreign army during war time. Even children in Chittagong and Midnapore have to carry about cards of identity. The movements of people are strictly regulated, even their dress has to conform to official directions, and heavy fines are imposed on whole towns and villages to

1. *Daily Herald* (London), 2 October 1933; later reprinted under the title *The Indian Struggle for Freedom in Recent Essays and Writings*, (Allahabad, 1934), pp. 113-120.

which the residents are made to contribute, regardless of guilt or innocence. Every hint of police or military barbarity is suppressed and punished and even official enquiries are denied. An occasional act of terrorism by a youth is answered by the organised and continuous terrorism and reprisals of the State.

British newspapers attack the Indian national movement from a variety of fronts, regardless of the obvious inconsistency of their statements. On the one hand, the Congress is said to be a reactionary body controlled by millowners and the like; on the other, no-rent campaigns are said to be the work of Bolsheviks and their kind rousing up the peaceful peasantry by their artful agitation. Even well-informed newspapers give currency to statements which are entirely wrong and have no relation to facts. Some time ago one of the best of the English weeklies stated as a fact that the movement against untouchability and for the raising of the depressed classes was started by Mr. Gandhi's fast last year and that the Congress had closed its doors to these classes. As a matter of fact the movement is an old one and it has been one of the biggest movements in India since 1920 when the Congress, at Mr. Gandhi's instance, made it a major plank in its programme. The Congress has never kept out the depressed classes and during the last thirteen years it has insisted on representatives of the depressed classes being elected to its highest executive committee. Mr. Gandhi's fast undoubtedly gave the movement a tremendous push.

India and the East generally are supposed to be mysterious lands where strange people work in strange and peculiar ways and no real attempt is made to understand them. This magic view of history and geography may perhaps fit in with the somewhat romantic and unworldly, and yet profitable, outlook of the average conservative or liberal politician who has no other standards to go by. But labour believes in a scientific and economic interpretation of history and current events and it is surprising that British labour should suffer under the same delusion. Perhaps generations of imperialist domination have affected the ideology of British labour and made it unable to take a correct and objective view where British imperialist interests are concerned. We are told by labour leaders that nationalism is a narrow creed and therefore Indian nationalism is reactionary. Under cover of this doctrine they seek to perpetuate British imperialism calling it by the high-sounding title of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Nationalism is of course a reactionary force in the modern world, whether it functions in England or India, but it is an inevitable reaction to imperialism in colonial countries, and a step which cannot be avoided in the march to real internationalism. To defend any



kind of imperialism by calling colonial nationalism as reactionary is sheer hypocrisy.

It is a commonplace that great movements are not caused by individuals or a handful of agitators but are due, in the main, to economic forces. The Indian national movement arose in this way and in its early days was controlled by the upper middle class. It was not essentially hostile to imperialism as this class itself was a product of British rule and wanted to fit itself into the fabric of imperialism. The march of economic events, however, wrought a change in it and the lower middle class and the *declassé* intellectuals began to dominate it. India played an important part in the great national wave that shook the whole of Asia after the Great War. A great national leader inspired the people and for the first time the masses, and especially the peasantry, took an effective part in the national struggle. In the after-war years the association of the masses with the Congress increased progressively and in some provinces the peasantry played an important role in formulating policy and in participating in direct action. The industrial workers, especially in Bombay, built up a trade union movement and developed a revolutionary ideology. As an organized group they did not cooperate with the Congress but they were powerfully influenced by it and many took part in the Congress campaigns. At the same time Indian labour carried on its own fight against capitalism by means of strikes.

As the Congress became more radical and dependent on mass support, the Indian vested interests that were represented in it became frightened and some of them dropped out. It was out of these leavings that the small and ineffective moderate or liberal group was formed. Association with the masses forced economic issues to the front in the Congress and a socialist ideology began to develop. A number of vaguely socialist resolutions were passed from time to time and in 1931 the Congress took a more definite step in this direction by adopting an economic programme at Karachi.

The direct action struggle of the Congress during the last four years, and the slump and a rapid march of economic events in the world during this period, have resulted in influencing the Congress powerfully in a socialist direction, and the struggle for independence has come more and more to mean a radical change in the social order to bring relief to the suffering masses. In a recent correspondence Mr. Gandhi declared that real independence must mean the divesting of the vested interests in India. The Congress still continues to be a national organisation and as such includes in its fold many groups and classes which have conflicting social interests. But recent events



have forced the economic issue to the forefront and, as a result, the Congress has become even more a mass organisation and the Indian vested interests, from the princes downwards, have joined hands with British vested interests in India to resist all real political and social change. The Round Table Conference in London was such a grouping of vested interests. Thus inevitably our struggle for independence is also becoming a struggle for social freedom.

The word independence is not a happy word for it signifies isolation and there can be no such isolation or independence in the modern world. But the word has to be used for want of a better one. It must not be understood, however, to mean that we want to cut ourselves off from the rest of the world. We do not believe in a narrow and aggressive nationalism. We believe in inter-dependence and international cooperation, but at the same time we are convinced that there can be no dependence whatever and no real cooperation with imperialism. Thus we want complete independence from every kind of imperialism. But that does not rule out the fullest cooperation with the British people or other peoples who do not wish to exploit us. With imperialism there can be and will be no compromise under whatever guise it may come.

Essentially therefore our struggle for freedom is a struggle for a radical change of the social structure and the ending of all exploitation of the masses. This can only be done by the divesting of the great vested interests in India, and the biggest of these is that of the British Government. A mere process of changing officials, of 'Indianisation', as it is called, of giving a high office to an Indian instead of an Englishman, has no interest whatever for us. It is the system which exploits the masses of India that we object to and which must go before any effective relief comes to the masses.

The Round Table Conferences in London have proceeded on an entirely different basis. Almost their sole concern has been to protect every conceivable vested interest and make it impregnable and to this crowd of parasites they wish to add others. Thus the whole Round Table scheme instead of lessening the exploitation of the masses actually puts fresh burdens on them. We are told by the Secretary of State for India that the constitutional changes will involve extra expenditure of many millions and therefore must wait till the world has got over its present economic discontents and India is more prosperous! He may have to wait a long time if he wishes these discontents to be solved according to his liking. His statement shows a singular lack of appreciation of what is happening in the world and



what is likely to happen in the future. But even apart from that it is an extraordinary instance of the powerful reasoning powers of Whitehall and the India Office. India is in a state of revolt because the working classes, the peasantry and the lower middle classes are crushed by various kinds of exploitation. They want immediate relief; they want bread for their hungry stomachs. Even the great majority of the landlords are being reduced to beggary as the land tenure system is breaking down. The remedy for this collapse and widespread misery is sought in propping up all the vested interests that have brought it about and in attempting to strengthen a semi-feudal order which has long outlived its utility and is an obstacle to all progress. In addition to this further burdens are cast on the masses. And then we are told that when conditions right themselves of their own accord, it will be time enough to introduce changes.

It is manifest that this method of procedure is the sheerest quibbling with a great problem affecting vast numbers of human beings. The Round Table scheme, whether it is adopted by the British Parliament as it is, or varied, will not solve a single problem in India. Much is made in England of the so-called 'die-hard' opposition to it, of the attacks of the Churchill-Lloyd group and of the defence bravely put up by Mr. Baldwin and others. So far as India is concerned it views these mock battles with supreme unconcern for, whatever the result of these may be, it will not affect her attitude to a scheme which is reactionary, absurd and unworkable to an extraordinary degree. The British Government may succeed in grouping round itself all the backward, feudal and reactionary groups in India, including even the bigoted religious obscurantists who have been frightened by Mr. Gandhi's attacks on their strongholds. If it finds pleasure in this varied company we have no complaint. It makes our task easier in bringing about a social change together with a real political change.

Thus so far as the Congress is concerned the Round Table Conferences and the Joint Select Committee have made no difference whatever to our struggle for freedom, except in so far as they have cleared issues and demonstrated that British imperialism stands for all that is reactionary in India. Under these circumstances the struggle for independence and social change must go on. Indeed it is not in the power of any individual or group to end this struggle. Even the Congress cannot do it for the struggle for freedom is the natural result of economic conditions, and so long as these conditions continue they must find an outlet in such a struggle. If the Congress leaders withdraw, other people and other organisations will take their place.

A political solution of the struggle can only come when the Indian people can settle their own constitution in a popularly elected constituent assembly. Such an assembly would also, I have no doubt, solve the minority and other problems, which have assumed so much prominence because their solution has been entrusted not to popularly chosen spokesmen but to official nominees. It is these reactionary nominees who have refused to agree among themselves and made it appear that the Indian people cannot agree. The Indian people have never been given a real chance to solve the problems for themselves. So far as the Congress is concerned it has little difficulty as it has long been prepared to guarantee minority rights.

The Congress does not want any power for itself. I am sure that it will willingly abide by the decision of the constituent assembly, and even dissolve itself as soon as Indian political independence is achieved. It is doubtful, however, if under existing conditions, or in the near future, such a constituent assembly can be held. The more this is delayed the more will the political problem of India become an economic one and the ultimate change will be social as well as political. The struggle for Indian freedom is essentially a part of the world struggle for the emancipation of the exploited everywhere and for the establishment of a new social order.

## 2. To A.L. Simha<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow

October 7, 1933

Dear Simha,

I have your letter.<sup>2</sup> It is perfectly true that some efforts are being made in various parts of the country to form groups and parties within or without the Congress. That is quite natural in a living organization. It would be absurd to say that the situation in the country is a perfectly satisfactory one or that all is well with the Congress.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. A.L. Simha, a physician of Madras, had suggested that a new party called the National Socialist Party be started by Jawaharlal. He also asked him to define the Congress attitude to the White Paper, council entry and communal pacts.



Nobody can make such a claim. We are up against a hard job and we expect difficulties at every step. But all this does not justify in my opinion what you said in your previous letter about the Congress. If the strength of an organization is to be judged by its hold on the mass mind then the Congress is more powerful today than it has ever been, despite the criticism of a number of people. And the long shadow of the Congress continually darkens the horizon of our Viceroys and Secretaries of State.

I propose, if I have the time, to write a number of articles in the public press on the present situation and I will refer you to them for my views. The three questions that you put in your letter betray a great deal of ignorance of the Congress policy. But I shall answer them briefly:

1. The Congress attitude towards the White Paper<sup>3</sup> is one of supreme contempt.
2. The Congress is committed to a programme of direct action against the government which takes the shape of civil disobedience. Direct action and so-called constitutional action do not go well together though it may be possible to combine them to some extent under certain circumstances. Council entry being a form of constitutional action is thus not compatible with the present policy of the Congress. Indeed the Lahore session of the Congress called for a boycott of the councils and that decision stands today. Apart from this I fail to understand how the question arises. Estimates vary. But it appears that under no circumstance will the new councils function before another three or four years. Personally I do not think they will ever function. Long before they appear on the scene much will have happened in India and the world to put them out of action. I do not understand how any practical politician can lay down any definite programme in regard to the councils so long ahead when Indian and world conditions are changing so rapidly.
3. Regarding communal pacts, the Congress has not sanctioned or approved of any pact. The Lahore session laid down that a national solution should be found for this question. At the same time the Congress has always expressed its readiness to accept any scheme that is agreed to between the parties. The Congress is further willing to go to the utmost length to assure the minorities that all their rights will be protected. Presumably in referring to communal pacts you mean the Poona Pact of last year. The Congress as an organization has not even considered this but it is perfectly true that many

3. Setting out British constitutional proposals for India.

noted Congressmen headed by Gandhiji have accepted it as it stands. The essence of this Pact, as I understand it, is to give assurance to the depressed classes that they will be given considerable representation under the new scheme. So far as this principle is concerned I have no doubt that the Congress will agree to it, and it may even agree to the figure given in the Pact because it has all along been the Congress policy to adopt a generous policy to minorities and backward groups. But as I have said above the Congress has had no chance of considering this so far.

I do not know what you mean by a fascist programme. Fascism has a certain technical meaning. It means a grouping together of the possessing classes to keep down the working classes. If that is what you desire I am entirely against it. Indeed we see a brand of fascism already in the country grouping itself round the British Government. They are the greatest enemies of the movement for national freedom.

You may certainly publish this letter if you so wish.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### 3. To Asaf Ali<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
October 12, 1933

My dear Asaf Ali,<sup>2</sup>

I have your letter.<sup>3</sup> You will forgive me if I send you a brief reply as my mother's illness and various other matters are filling up my time. Any real reply to your letter would develop into a long essay. You will perhaps get some idea of how my mind is working from certain articles

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (1888-1953); leading Congressman of Delhi; secretary, Congress Parliamentary Board, 1934; member, Congress Working Committee, 1940-42; imprisoned during 1942-45; deputy leader, Congress Party in the Central Assembly, 1945; member, Interim Government, 1946-47; ambassador, U.S.A., 1947-48; Governor of Orissa 1948-52; ambassador, Switzerland, 1952-53.

3. Asaf Ali in his letter of 30 September 1933 wrote that he felt the need for a positive programme as "unity, removal of untouchability, khaddar... did not evoke any dynamic enthusiasm."



which I have been sending to the press. If I have the time and the opportunity I shall write more for the press.

Personally I think that a withdrawal of civil disobedience would be a blunder of the first magnitude. Having regard both to the Indian situation and the international situation I feel that our direct action struggle must be carried on even though at a low level.

From the point of view of the struggle I do not attach importance to what are called the constructive activities of the Congress. I am, therefore, not interested at present in any such activities or rather it would be more correct to say that I am not prepared to give any time or energy to them.

I am not at all enamoured of Harijan work though of course I am very keen on the abolition of untouchability. I realise that there is some feeling among the Mussulmans that the Harijan movement is aimed at strengthening the Hindus politically. This is of course without foundation but none the less it is there. As a matter of fact the aspect of the Harijan movement which appeals to me most is that it will weaken the Hindus in the sense that it will create a split among them. I like such splits because they clear up the position and bring real issues before the public. It is a good thing that the orthodox section of the Hindus is showing its true colours and behaving politically as a most reactionary group.

As for unity—communal unity—I agree with you that there is no room for any attempt to bring about a compromise to replace MacDonald's Communal Award.

I do not see how the question of council entry arises now. According to the most optimistic estimates any new council will not begin functioning for three or four years. Practical politicians do not lay down their immediate programme for a contingency which may occur three years later or may not occur at all. Personally, I doubt if the Round Table scheme will ever function in India.

I do not think it is possible for us now, even if civil disobedience is withdrawn, to organise the peasantry and others properly. All manner of obstructions are being and will be put in the way of such real work. It seems to me almost easier to do some organisational work in the rural areas through civil disobedience than otherwise.

I do not attach much importance to the particular Maharashtra group which is said to have organised a new party.<sup>4</sup> But I know well that

4. Jamnadas Mehta, Kelkar and other leaders of Maharashtra decided on 30 August 1933 to form the Democratic Swaraj Party to work for the attainment of full independence by all legal and constitutional means.

individuals here and there think on those lines and may drop out of the Congress if the Congress carries on an aggressive direct action policy. I think that need not worry us much. It is an inevitable development. Such groups will not injure our cause but might even strengthen it because the issues will become clearer before the country.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

#### 4. To Nabakrushna Chaudhuri<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

October 15, 1933

Dear Comrade,<sup>2</sup>

I am glad to receive your two letters.<sup>3</sup> I have read them with the greatest interest. In many things that you say I am in entire agreement with you. I do not agree with what you say regarding a secret organisation to carry on the work. I think that secrecy is a possible and an effective method under certain circumstances. I have no moral objection to it at all but under present circumstances I do not think that secret methods will help us at all. Of course this does not mean that we should not have private methods of consultation and work. This is always permissible. Our fight is essentially based on mass morale and I am sure that secret methods undermine this morale. If our movement is to be essentially a mass movement it cannot help being an open movement. There is a certain inconsistency between the satyagraha method of open defiance and secret methods which involve an avoidance of conflict by numerous individuals. I can quite conceive our adopting knowingly secret methods of organisation as, for instance, exist in Germany today; but that will involve an entire change of tactics for us. It will also mean winding up the open struggle. This kind of secret activity is usually indulged in when

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (b. 1901); participated in the noncooperation movements; founder-member of the Congress Socialist Party in Orissa, 1934; Chief Minister, Orissa, 1951-53.

3. In these letters written on 8 September and 9 October 1933 he advocated "a network of sound secret bodies".



large scale activities are impossible. It is only a preparation for something big later. In our country the whole basis of our struggle having been open defiance in order to inculcate character and backbone in our people—and in this it has succeeded to a remarkable extent—it is very difficult to switch on to an entirely different method. This really means ending the present struggle and laying the foundations for a different type of struggle. I feel that in spite of the lull that prevails we are still strong enough to carry on the struggle, though at a lower pitch. Both on national and international grounds it is essential for us to carry on the struggle at present. We cannot afford to be quiescent when at any moment a great international crisis may develop. Therefore, I think that our work must be of an open and aggressive character. At the same time it is perfectly open to us to have private consultations and group action. This is what Gandhiji himself said in his letter to me in Poona. I am sending a copy of my correspondence with Gandhiji.<sup>4</sup>

I agree with you that it is necessary to organise nuclei of Congress workers in all provinces who are ready for a sustained and prolonged fight. That is exactly what we have been doing in our province. We have discussed very fully with our provincial workers and district leaders the present position in India and the world and we have asked them to have similar discussions in each of their districts. I am sending you a copy of the resolutions passed by us. We propose to issue more detailed instructions within a few days to our districts.

It comes to this then that we must carry on the struggle aggressively and openly in the form of civil disobedience and in the course of this organise and consolidate our position as well as try to change the ideology of our workers. This is a difficult task of course but it seems to me the only way to do it. Some people imagine that we can organise better if we stop the fight. I think this is wrong and the government will not let us organise openly even then, quite apart from the fact that winding up of the fight will bring utter demoralisation.

As you say, in every great fight there is bound to be an ebb and flow. This need not discourage us in the least and I am not discouraged by the state of affairs in India at present. The tall talk of British officials is largely bluff and the whole international situation is in our favour. But to take advantage of it we must not give in. I do not think it is possible for us to switch on the struggle for national power to local economic issues as suggested by Gandhiji in the article you have sent

4. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 526-530.

me.<sup>5</sup> There is exhaustion today both among the workers and the peasantry and little can be done immediately to rouse them up even on an issue that affects them immediately. Where possible of course this should be done but essentially the national fight must continue and we should try to make it a social and economic fight as well for the broad masses. Fundamentally this means the development of a new ideology. I am trying to help in this process by writing articles in the press which you may have perhaps noticed.

You can rest assured that we do not forget your province. But, as matters stand, it is not easy to give anything more than sympathy.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

5. In his article *Substance not Shadow* published in *Young India* on 18 June 1931, Mahatma Gandhi suggested that in the event of a failure to reach an agreement at the Round Table Conference it was better not to "force Swaraj through highly artificial surroundings" and meanwhile the Congress could "fulfil its mission" of representing the masses by fighting for their economic relief.

## 5. To H.K. Hales<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

October 17, 1933

Dear Mr. Hales,<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for your letter.<sup>3</sup> I am sorry for the delay in answering it.

There is no present intention of calling a meeting of the National Congress. A meeting of the All India Congress Committee, however, may be held if a proper requisition for it reaches me.

National struggles against an alien domination invariably give rise to bitter feelings. That is unfortunate. And yet, I think, it may

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Conservative member of the House of Commons; had contacts with British manufacturing interests in India.

3. In his letter of 6 October 1933, Hales had appealed to Jawaharlal to base future Congress policy on "love, not hatred".



be said with some confidence that we have tried in India to avoid this bitterness as far as possible and to base our struggle on love for the cause and not hatred for the opponent. Personally I feel that it is inevitable that India should sever her present connection with the British Empire because such connection can only be based on the domination of England over India. That of course does not mean that we should break all contacts with England or that we should remain opponents. Indeed I feel sure that the only true comradeship that can exist between the two countries can only come when both are free of each other and can meet on a basis of equality.

I agree with you that construction and not destruction should be our motto. But to construct properly one has often to remove the debris of an old structure.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 6. To Swami Govindananda<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
October 26, 1933

Dear Friend,

I received your letter of the 12th October about four or five days ago.<sup>2</sup> I regret the delay in answering it. I have today sent you a telegram to the following effect:

Reference your letter. Suggest your sending requisition for meeting. Signatures may come separately.

With much that you say in your letter I am in agreement but I also disagree with a great part of it. I do not think it will serve any useful purpose to reply in an argumentative manner. There are one or two points however to which I should like to refer. You mentioned that "there is a deep resentment in the whole country against this effort

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Swami Govindananda feared that the Congress leadership would meet the same fate as Kerensky in Russia and felt that the situation demanded the convening of the A.I.C.C.

to decide the fate of an old nation behind closed doors in Poona between you and Gandhiji." I was not aware that I was a party to any such decision as you refer to. Nor have I seen anywhere signs of any such resentment. I went to Poona soon after my discharge from prison to consult with Gandhiji about various matters and subsequently we issued a resume of our conversations in the form of letters addressed to each other. I fail to see how this can cause resentment to anybody or how it can be interpreted as deciding the fate of nations.

If the state of India today is similar to the one obtaining in Russia in the last quarter of 1917, as you suggest, surely this is not a matter for regret for the last quarter saw the beginnings of a great revolution. If we are on the eve of such a revolution, let us welcome it by all means. Personally I do not think there is any analogy whatsoever between 1917 in Russia and 1933 in India.

I am not interesting myself in the Harijan movement as it is being carried on, and, so far as I am concerned, my energy will be utilised for political work alone. The name Harijan is new but you will remember that the abolition of untouchability has been a fundamental part of the Congress programme for many years.

Regarding the A.I.C.C. meeting you must be aware that I have repeatedly invited a requisition and have stated that immediately on receipt of it I shall convene the meeting. I am placed in a somewhat difficult position and in order to gauge the feeling of the members of the A.I.C.C. I took the only course open to me, i.e., asked for a requisition if a sufficient number of members desire the meeting. For the last five weeks I have been patiently waiting for such a requisition but none has come. It is rather strange that there should be this delay in a requisition coming if, as you say, an overwhelming majority of members desire a meeting. It is very easy for them to write to me as you have done. I can assure you that I want to put no obstacles whatever in the way of a meeting. As, however, there appear to be two sets of opinions, one desiring a meeting and the other definitely not desiring it, I left it to those members who wanted the meeting to take the initiative. I might add that to remove any technical difficulties that may stand in the way of members living in different places I am perfectly prepared to accept as a requisition if the requisite number of members, that is, 30, write to me even separately. If even this number do not wish to do so, and this number represents about 8% of the total membership, then I can only conclude that the great majority of members do not desire a meeting at present.

I would therefore suggest to you, as I have done in my telegram, that you and those who think with you should write to me formally



on the subject. If your demand for the meeting is supported by others even though they write independently to me I shall immediately convene a meeting.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 7. To N.S. Hardikar<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
October 28, 1933

My dear Hardikar,

... I have just seen that Kamaladevi has been arrested in Gudivada.<sup>2</sup> This was rather unexpected. I suppose that probably she will be let off soon. But one never knows. This kind of thing is bound to continue. People talk of our withdrawing our offensive but they forget that the other party's offensive is continuous and unrelenting.

Ever yours,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Hardikar Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. Arrested on 27 October 1933 while delivering a speech.

## 8. To H.K. Hales<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
October 28, 1933

Dear Mr. Hales,

I thank you for your letter of the 25th October.<sup>2</sup> I am afraid there is a vital difference in our viewpoints and there is not much meeting

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Hales thought a dissolution of Indo-British relations was 'unthinkable' and wished to meet Indian leaders to discuss the White Paper.

ground. I can assure you that I feel convinced that the policy I suggested will succeed not only in my lifetime but before I am very much older. As for those who agree with my viewpoint I can also assure you that they are a very large number.

It is not a question of a husband and wife separating but one of, if I may use a similar analogy, the perpetrator of a rape being made to part company with his victim. There can be no normal relations after a forcible rape. That rape must be atoned for before cooperation can arise, for this has to be based on mutual respect and mutual freedom.

I have no fear that India will be placed in a position of insecurity after her separation from Great Britain. Some Liberal politicians in India may desire protection from external invasions through the British armed forces but so far as the Congress is concerned the very first and the most vital thing that we want is the ending of this so-called protection.

I should like you to consider the measure of security we have in India today. You invited Mr. Gandhi some time back to visit Midnapore. I do not know if you have yourself visited Midnapore or Chittagong. I think a visit to these places and an impartial enquiry would reveal to you that whatever else Indians may have or may not have, they have not got the least measure of security under British rule. I have never heard of any other incident in war time or in peace time or even in territory occupied by a hostile army, when children were called upon to keep cards of identity as they are required to do in Chittagong and Midnapore. I refer only to one incident. I can add to it but no doubt you can easily find out what British rule means to us by studying the record of happenings in these two districts of Bengal as well as in the Frontier Province.

If I may quote Arthur Griffith,<sup>3</sup> the founder of Sinn Fein, "England has one of her hands at our throat and the other hand in our pockets." So long as both these hands are not removed there can obviously be no talk of peace between England and India.

You are perfectly right in saying that the White Paper is unwelcome to every community in India. So far as the Congress is concerned it is totally indifferent to the fate of the White Paper because in its opinion it is wholly misconceived and incapable of improvement. We are not prepared to accept the dictum that we must leave the decision of the fate of our country into the hands of any foreign body or group of individuals. That fate must be settled by Indians themselves. This cannot be done by a few odd individuals, some of whom represent

3. (1872-1922); President of the Irish Republic, 1921-22.



nobody but themselves, discussing and coming to an agreement with the opposite party. The right way to proceed is for a constituent assembly, elected by the people as a whole on the broadest franchise, to be held in India. I think it should be realised by our friends in England that the one certain way to court failure in India is to imagine that they could coerce the Indian people to act in the way they desire. It is impossible to coerce for any length of time any country or people with a flicker of life in them. And India has a bright enough flame which cannot be put out. So long as the element of coercion lasts it seems very much out of place to talk of cooperation.

I am perfectly willing to meet any individual or group, subject to my engagements, to discuss the present and the future in India. But personally I do not think that a meeting of the small group suggested by you would serve any useful purpose.

I have written to you quite frankly because I think it would be unfair to you if I clothed my thoughts and ideas in ambiguous language.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 9. To Secretary, Bikaner Political Case Committee<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
October 29, 1933

Dear Sir,

I have your letter as well as a copy of your telegram to the Maharaja of Bikaner. It seems to me from the facts you have stated that grave injustice is being done in the case referred to.<sup>2</sup> You have my full sympathy in the matter. I feel, however, that what is really wrong is the whole Indian states system. Anything more incompetent, corrupt and autocratic it is difficult to imagine. I have no doubt in my mind

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Seven subjects of Bikaner state had been charged with sedition and held for two years without trial. The Bikaner Political Case Committee was formed on 18 August 1933 to assist the accused.

that it must go completely before any proper solution of the Indian problem can be found.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

**10. To J.T. Gwynn<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
Nov. 2, 1933

Dear Mr. Gwynn,

I received your letter some days ago and I read it with great interest. I am glad you have written frankly and fully. I believe in frankness in politics and I have always endeavoured, within the limits that an active political worker has sometimes to face, to express my thoughts freely. Sometimes indeed both my colleagues and opponents have been somewhat embarrassed by my frankness.

I am perfectly willing to write to you from time to time or to answer any questions that you may put to me, if they are capable of an answer. Unhappily intelligent argument does not go very far when interests are at stake but none the less it makes a difference and the more of it we have the better. I know that there are a large number of people in England who want to know and understand the other side and if I can be of the slightest help to them in doing so I shall gladly make the attempt. As for the *Manchester Guardian* I have always had a soft corner in my heart for it in spite of occasional irritation at what I consider its perverted and wrong-headed Indian policy.

But there are some difficulties in my way. The lives of many of us are spent largely in Indian prisons with brief intervals spent in the wider world outside. We come out and have to face difficult political and economic problems and domestic upsets and illness. We try to do what we can in a rush and hurry and before we are even half way through the immediate problems that demand attention, back we go to prison. This kind of life is not helpful in carrying on a long distance correspondence. There is neither the time nor the inclination to write.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts from this letter were published in the *Manchester Guardian* of 15 December 1933.



Indian newspapers may help you to form some vague idea of conditions in the country. But that idea will be wholly inadequate. Partly this is so because they dare not give even the facts for fear of consequences, much less can they give expression to radical opinions. Partly, I must confess, it is due to a singular lack of comprehension of the major forces and events that are shaping the world and India today. I wonder if you have any notion of what is happening even now in parts of Bengal, notably the Midnapore and Chittagong areas, and the Frontier Province. The most amazing reprisals on a mass scale are indulged in by the government forces and yet little of this is allowed to appear in the press.

I cannot write to you, I am afraid, a long letter at present as I am hard pressed for time. If I attempted to deal with all the points you have raised and to answer your questions at all adequately I would have to write a long essay. I shall deal just with a few of the points briefly. I have recently written some articles in the Indian press and these have appeared in pamphlet form.<sup>2</sup> I am sending you these pamphlets separately. They will give you some idea of how my mind is working. I am also sending you a copy of an article which I gave to a correspondent of the London *Daily Herald*.<sup>3</sup> I have no idea if this article has appeared or is going to appear in the *Herald*.

I think you are right in saying that Mr. Gandhi has suppressed to some extent independent thought and initiative. Is that not inevitable when a great personality with a magnetic and extraordinary power of mass appeal arises? And yet, fundamentally, I think your statement is not wholly correct. There was very little independent political thought before what might be called the Gandhi era. Our middle class politicians and intellectuals merely repeated some phrases which they had learnt from the 19th century English liberal writers, regardless of their applicability to Indian conditions. Gandhi for the first time succeeded in pulling some of them out of these ruts and made them think along different lines, or rather to act along different lines. This action and the course of events gradually forced a newer ideology—vague and confused no doubt but with some relation to facts. But Gandhi's real contribution was not this change in the horizon of the intelligentsia or part of it, important as this was. It was the vast change he wrought in the mentality of the Indian masses. This was not just a Messiah worship, as is often stated. There was certainly a great deal

2. See *ante*, section 1.

3. See *ante*, item 1.



of the idea of a Messiah in the popular mind and yet there was something far more. India has had and has today no lack of people who are called mahatmas and revered, and even blindly obeyed by their followers. But the awakening that Gandhi brought about was definitely a political awakening of the masses. Gandhi was the political leader of India, not a religious one. Political subjects began to be discussed in the villages and the bazaars, quite divorced from religion and communalism. Thus, instead of suppressing political ideas, Gandhi actually did the reverse from a mass point of view. This sudden release from long continued suppression, and the programme of open and defiant action that Gandhi put forward, worked an amazing change in the masses. A helpless and demoralized people looked up and gathered strength and confidence in themselves and began to hope.

It is true that the new thought and action all ran along one channel. That was bound to happen in a mass movement. Some intellectuals who opposed the new trend were swept aside by the current, but this was largely because they had proved themselves bankrupt in ideas, ineffective in action, and hopelessly out of touch with realities.

Gandhi thus released thought from its old bondage and did not suppress it. The mass movement however tended to enforce conformity. Even this conformity did not and could not stop the growth of new ideas. What it did was to kill or smother the lifeless ideology of the Indian moderates. To some extent it is true that other ideas more in fitness with modern conditions were also partly smothered in the process but they were bound to survive and they have grown.

Today there is nothing more pitiful than the wail of the Indian moderate that nobody will listen to him. He is so badly stuck in the ruts that it is impossible for him to come out and face facts. I am quite convinced that an intelligent peasant is more in touch with economic and political realities, though in a very limited way, than the highly intellectual (?) moderate leader. Talking to a group of moderates one feels that one is in a monastery and the monks have been completely cut off for long years from the world of thought and action.

Gandhi of course did not function in the air. The conditions were such that he could utilise them and work with them. It was a union of a great personality with objective conditions and the result was powerful mass movements.

The fundamental problem of India today, quite apart from independence and the like, is the incompatibility of the political and economic structures with existing conditions. The political structure is terribly expensive and top-heavy; it is toppling over through sheer financial



instability. There are of course other reasons also. The condition of the peasantry and the industrial workers is steadily deteriorating and no real relief seems possible under existing conditions. The zamindari system, which prevails in some of the provinces, is hard hit. The British Government is in a quandary. Politically it supports the zamindars in order to draw them to itself. Economically the zamindars are a nuisance to government and are no longer required. The government would like to increase its own revenue from land and this can come only at the cost of the zamindar. The government would also like to better the lot of the peasantry, partly in order to soothe them and prevent them from aggressive mass activity, and partly to increase their purchasing power so that they might consume foreign, and especially British, goods more. This would help British trade and also increase the customs revenue of the central government and thus give it much needed relief. The poor zamindar does not fit in with this scheme of things and yet for reasons of state policy he has to be patted on the back.

About the British connection I hold somewhat radical views. I cannot conceive of it, under present conditions, except in terms of imperialist domination and exploitation of India. I do not think that any fair cooperation on equal terms is possible so long as England does not change her own form of government radically. Nor do I think that the British Commonwealth of Nations is itself stable enough to survive for long. But whatever may be the fate of the dominions, India stands apart from them and she cannot fit in as others have done. I have touched upon this in my pamphlet.

The White Paper seems to me to be an utterly bad thing designed entirely to perpetuate and consolidate British domination, both directly and through the most backward and reactionary groups in India. I do not think it is even capable of improvement and personally I doubt if the proposals in it will ever be applied to India in that form. In any event such an application is so distant still that the question what we should do then does not arise now.

As in the West, the economic problem overshadows everything—the condition of the peasantry and the petty zamindars, the landless proletariat, the industrial workers, the *declassé* intellectuals and the large numbers of middle class people without the possibility of employment, and the extraordinarily expensive and out of date structure of government. To solve this problem with any success means the ending of British rule and something more, and so the problem is not faced at all, even though conditions deteriorate.



The problem of the army does not trouble me at all. Of course in all great changes there is a certain amount of risk which must be undertaken. I do not want the least bit of army control by the British and I should like to see the British army of occupation depart as soon as possible. If this was agreed to peacefully by both parties there would be no difficulty in making the necessary arrangements for the change-over and for the security of India. But such things are unhappily never agreed to peacefully. Inevitably, a struggle has to decide the issue and a successful struggle in itself creates the strength to protect the country from outside aggression as well as internal disruption.

I am strongly attracted towards communism and I feel that the only reasonable and scientific explanation of history is the communist one. I do not approve of many things that have taken place in Russia nor am I a communist in the accepted sense of the word. But taking everything together I have been greatly impressed by the Russian experiment. As you say communism was not given a fair chance in a backward country like Russia. It would have been far different and far more successful in a country of western Europe. And yet Russia seems to have made good and the new generation that is rising up there is an extraordinarily promising one.

I have a weakness for Oxford and what it stands for myself. If something like it, only with a broader base, could be retained, well and good. But even Oxford and its like are not worth the sacrifice of the wider mass culture and initiative that the right kind of communism should bring forth.

After all, the ultimate choice seems to lie between some type of communism or fascism; the middle forms seem to fade off. Between these two all my mind and heart is for the former.

I am all against organized religion even in its social aspect. Much more so do I object to it in its political manifestations. Communal representation may have to be put up with because of various factors, the principal reason being that a denial of it actually increases the disease. But I have no doubt that the British Government have deliberately aggravated this disease by their policy. Even today I would say that the disease is not nearly so bad as the government makes it out to be. It is there of course. But the government nominees to the R.T.C. were a thoroughly bad lot from the communal point of view and every effort was made to suppress the other party. Ultimately, I suppose, communalism will go by the diversion of interest to economic issues. Even now one can see this happening in the agrarian movements. Even from the purely nationalist point of view, the younger generation of Moslems is leaving its old moorings and has already discarded its



so-called leaders. These leaders, by the way, are more or less *purdashin* people who seldom go to the public. They meet in private and issue long statements which interest very few persons even among their own co-religionists.

Essentially the Moslem communalist belongs to the middle class and is out for a job, and his prototype of the Hindu Mahasabha is exactly the same, with this difference that the latter organisation is confined largely to a group of the richer people—landlords, a few capitalists and even a few princes. Both the communalists are political reactionaries.

Many of the younger Moslems, and of course the younger Hindus and others also, are beginning to think on socialistic and communistic lines.

There is a slight tendency in Bengal to keep itself apart from India, culturally and politically. I think this is largely due to a feeling that the rest of India does not fully appreciate the great sacrifices of Bengal in the struggle for freedom. This feeling is not a correct one. At the same time there are many other forces at work knitting the various provinces closer together and I think that the momentary irritation in Bengal will pass off.

I am afraid I cannot discuss individuals in this letter. That is far too delicate a subject for an active politician.

I began this letter by saying that I would not write a long one. And yet I was drawn on, page after page, and I find that I have imposed quite a long letter on you. There is nothing confidential in what I have written to you and you can certainly make such use of it as you think proper.

Was it not you who paid me a visit in the Lucknow gaol in 1922?<sup>4</sup>

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. Gwynn had visited Jawaharlal in jail on 14 October 1922; see *Selected Works*, Vol. 1. p. 346.

## 11. To Kakalbhai Kothari<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

November 2, 1933

Dear Friend,<sup>2</sup>

I am in receipt of your letter. I wish the Kathiawar States' People's Convention, which is going to meet at Amreli, all success. Personally I feel that the States' People's Conferences have seldom faced the issue directly. They have discussed all manner of side issues and avoided the main one. In my opinion the present autocratic form of government in the Indian states is an absurd and dangerous relic of feudal times and should be done away with as speedily as possible. The proposed All India Federation according to the White Paper is an attempt to bolster up this autocracy and to consolidate themselves not only in the states, but also in India as a whole. Neither the people of the states nor of the rest of India can tolerate this imposition. I think the time has come when the people of the Indian states should take up a definite and clear attitude on the subject and should work with the rest of India for the realisation of the common goal of full freedom.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (1900-1966); at this time secretary, Indian States' People's Conference for Kathiawar and Kutch states.

## 12. On the Formation of the Democratic Swaraj Party<sup>1</sup>

Democratic Swaraj Party seems to me to be a misnomer; although, so far as I am concerned, they are welcome to any name, the more resounding the better, for it is likely to consist chiefly of a name.

It is not democratic and it obviously has no real public support. It has little to do with Swaraj.

So far as I can see it is not much of a party.

1. Interview to the press, Allahabad, 2 November 1933. *The Pioneer*, 5 November 1933.



The one aim that has brought a number of individuals together is the desire to enter the councils. So long as the Congress is a dangerous body they will keep far away from it. But they assure us most generously that if in the fulness of time the Congress becomes a perfectly safe, legal and constitutional organisation, they will be willing to join it.<sup>2</sup> That is something to be thankful for.

Mr. Kelkar's address as well as the other proceedings of the party, so far as they have been published in the press, are interesting revelations of the mentality that prevailed in India a couple of generations back.<sup>3</sup> I would suggest to the new party that a school of politics, economics and current affairs be opened for the benefit of its members.

2. At the Maharashtra Political Conference on 28 October 1933 it was decided that the members of the Democratic Swaraj Party would also be members of the Congress but this condition would not be enforced till the ban on the Congress had been lifted.
3. Kelkar had wanted "an effective manipulation of the legislative machine," and thought noncooperation was only a "sullen, static aloofness from the political machine."

### 13. To Mahatma Gandhi<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

November 8, 1933

My dear Bapu,

I have not written to you for three or four days although there was plenty to write about. I expected to go to Wardha and to see you. But this visit has fallen through now.

The effect of my telegram to Nariman was to make him pack up and come here.<sup>2</sup> Brelvi also turned up. We had long talks. It was evident that we held conflicting views about most matters however much we might seek to cover them in soft language. Nariman wanted to carry on open and aggressive propaganda for his view—indeed he

1. Maharashtra Government, Home Department (Special), Intercepted Letters.
2. The telegram of 3 November 1933 read: "Surprised at your public statement criticising colleagues Working Committee without referen<sup>c</sup> to them. Regarding your criticism suppression democracy what course do you suggest? Do you desire meeting Working Committee?"

had already begun this.<sup>3</sup> It seems to me ridiculous and impossible for the Working Committee members to carry on such propaganda against each other on vital matters of Congress policy. The only way out was for the A.I.C.C. to decide and it was up to those who wanted a change of programme to requisition a meeting. I suggested that the members of the old Working Committee should meet informally to consider the situation and if necessary to convene an A.I.C.C. meeting. Nariman agreed and hence my telegram to you.<sup>4</sup> It was obvious that such a consultation would not do much good. We all of us know more or less each other's views and a mere repetition would not convince anybody. Yet a measure of formality was required and there was no other way out. The date you fixed was a most inconvenient one for me as it conflicted with some rather important engagements. But I sacrificed them. Yesterday a telegram came from Abul Kalam Azad to say that he was very ill and suggesting that the consultations might be postponed for a few days. I wired to him that this could not be done. Then came Mahmud's telegram also saying that he could not come on this date. I was going to ignore this also when a sheaf of telegrams came from Bombay. Ansari could not come and hence Sarojini and Nariman suggested a date as soon after the 22nd as possible. The arrangement about the 11th thus fell through. I do not know when and where you can spare the time again. Nariman etc. suggest two clear days. I shall await your reply.

This proposed consultation is a most futile affair but what else can be done? I have suggested to Nariman that instead of this he and those who think with him should demand an A.I.C.C. meeting and I shall convene it. They waste time and energy over preliminaries. It may be that some of us have come to the parting of the ways. If so let us face it and the consequences.

If an A.I.C.C. meeting is held it seems to me that some place in the C.P. would be the most suitable for it. Probably Jubbulpore would suit you and others.

Malaviyaji returned from Mussoorie today and we had a long talk. The talk will be continued tomorrow morning. He was looking much better than when I last saw him.

3. Nariman, on 2 November 1933, objected to brushing aside the differences in the Congress and criticised the "tendency of some Congressmen to place individuals howsoever great above the organisation and party." He also issued a pamphlet *Whither Congress?* to give publicity to his views.
4. Dated 6 November 1933, the telegram read: "Nariman and I consider informal consultation with you, Azad, Ansari, Sarojini, Mahmud and others desirable within next 10 days or so. Suggest your fixing day, place suitable to you."



I have received your letter of Nov. 3 with its enclosures. The account of *sarkar salaam* is horrible and the mere reading of these barbarous doings upset me. We have had no such thing in the U.P. I feel quite sure that not all the might of the British Government can force us to submit to it here.

As for the Frontier Province note<sup>5</sup> I would rather not approach Sapru about it. I have given a copy of it to Malaviyaji.

Mother's progress is not as fast as it ought to be. And yet it is much to be thankful for that she is improving slowly.

I have just had a telegram from Jamnalalji asking me to stay for a few days at Wardha or the neighbourhood. I am afraid the trip is off.

Love,

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

5. This note stated that 300 Congress volunteers were being kept as under-trials for long periods followed by severe punishment and nearly Rs. 80,000/- had been extorted from the villages under one pretext or the other. It demanded an urgent enquiry into the repressive policy.

#### 14. To K.F. Nariman<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
November 8, 1933

My dear Nariman,

I have just received Ansari's and your telegrams. In accordance with your desires I have postponed the proposed consultation and have wired to Gandhiji accordingly. This sudden change is rather unfortunate. However, I suppose there is no help for it.

If Gandhiji suggests any other date I shall of course let you know. But personally I feel that the situation is developing too rapidly to permit of delay. All that a consultation with Gandhiji can result in is the decision to hold an A.I.C.C. meeting. Obviously no other decision can be arrived at by us. Delay now means a growth of the disruptive tendencies and unfortunate mutual criticisms which you deprecate. Personally, I do not wish to take the slightest part in such arguments. I feel, therefore, that the sooner we, as members of the Working Committee, know where we stand the better. Only the A.I.C.C.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-30/(1933-36), p. 288, N.M.M.L.

can decide this one way or the other. Why then should we not decide to hold it without further ado. Of course the members of the Working Committee should meet a little before the A.I.C.C. for mutual consultation.

I should prefer receiving a requisition for the A.I.C.C. meeting to having to take the initiative myself. I explained to you the reason why. In the alternative I can state that as some members of the Working Committee desire it, we have called the A.I.C.C. meeting. If this is settled all that remains is to fix up the date and place. Both these would partly depend on Gandhiji, that is, if we wish him to be present. Personally I would like him to be there. Even apart from Gandhiji there are certain advantages in having the meeting in the C.P. The atmosphere is quieter there and there is likely to be less obstruction.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 15. To H.K. Hales<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
November 9, 1933

Dear Mr. Hales,

I have just received your letter of November 7th.<sup>2</sup> It is not signed but I presume that this is due to inadvertence.

It is always a little difficult, even in normal conditions, to judge the extent that a particular view prevails in a country. In a fully democratic country this can be done, to some extent, although even there very often economic pressure on various groups makes them vote contrary to their own convictions. In India there being no democracy or democratic institutions there is no such test. A rough and ready way of judging popular sentiment is from newspapers, public meetings and the like. But this is obviously very incomplete and often deceptive because nationalist newspapers represent particular groups. There is certainly a common nationalist viewpoint which unites the people of a country which is under foreign domination. Under cover of this nationalism, however, various upper class groups lay stress on their own interests

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Hales suggested to Jawaharlal that as he was the "leader of a hopeless minority" he should recognise "the necessity of close cooperation with Britain."



far more than on the interests of the masses. Thus even under normal conditions there is no expression of views of the very great majority of the population.

This discrepancy between real feelings and their public expression becomes very marked under the abnormal conditions that have prevailed in India during the last two years or so. Strict censorship and special laws to prevent freedom of the press and meeting and other expression of opinion, make it quite impossible for an outsider to judge what is happening and even more so what people are thinking and feeling. Many people avoid saying what they really feel. Others who are prepared to face the consequences of frank statement do not find newspapers or presses who will help them in the process.

Thus it is not possible for anyone to say at a particular moment which viewpoint will prevail if perfect freedom of expression was given. We can only go by our general knowledge of the country and her people. From such knowledge as I possess of my countrymen and countrywomen, both of the middle classes and the working and agricultural classes, I am quite convinced that never, at any rate since the revolt of 1857, has there been such extraordinary bitterness against the British Government and such a passionate desire to be rid of it as exists today. For reasons of tactics some people may express themselves in a moderate or in an ambiguous way but their feelings are not fundamentally different from those of others. I admit that there are small groups who are afraid of real democracy in India because they fear that their special privileges and interests will suffer thereby. But these small groups apart, there is a universal desire for Indian independence. That is to say, a complete elimination of every vestige of imperial control.

This is very natural and you can find similar phenomena in many other countries where nationalism has grown as a reaction to imperialism. Thanks to Mr. Gandhi, the bitterness of nationalism has been largely toned down and specially there is hardly any feeling against individuals. But all history shows us that nationalism and imperialism are conflicting forces and there can be no compromise between them.

I should like you to appreciate that this is not a conflict between India and England, much less is it one between the Indian people and the British people. The conflict is with a certain system called imperialism which the British Government represents today in India and elsewhere. With that system, in the very nature of things, India cannot make peace because that system is based and exists solely by the exploitation of a subject country. If England changed her form and method of government and dropped all taint of imperialism from it there would



be little difficulty in the two countries cooperating for a common purpose. But the purpose must be a common one before there can be cooperation. Between imperialist England and nationalist India there is no common ground. It is from this point of view that I said that it was inevitable that India should sever her present connection with the British Empire.

I think that is the view of the vast majority of my fellow countrymen. Personally I am perfectly prepared to have a referendum or a plebiscite taken on this point and to accept its decision. But I want you, for a moment, to eliminate personal views and to consider the question historically and objectively. If you do so, I am sure that, inevitably, you will arrive at the conclusion I have done. We are living in the midst of great movements and vast economic and other forces which seem to be almost beyond human control. To imagine that a few odd individuals can change the destiny of nations by what they think or what they do not think is an out of date notion.

You told me that by no possibility can I achieve the object I have in view; nor can I have more than an infinitesimal proportion of the Indian population to support me. It is not a question of people supporting me or anyone else but of standing for an idea or an objective which for the moment some of us may represent. We may come or go but that idea remains and continues to move masses. I can only assure you of my conviction that that idea is bound to triumph within a reasonable time and the more the triumph is delayed the more radical and far-reaching it will be.

I have not the slightest feeling of hostility to the English people. As you perhaps know I was educated at Harrow and at Trinity College, Cambridge, and I have always had a warm corner in my heart for English friends and English ways. It can be no pleasure to me to carry on in a way which brings conflict and suffering. But the conflict is not of my creation nor indeed do I say that it is a British creation. It has been created by the march of events. If we want to resolve it and to end it we have to approach the question with a right historical and economic perspective and to face facts as they are and not as we would have them to be.

I am glad that we agree on two points: that the White Paper is thoroughly unwelcome to the people in India and secondly that the fate of India must be settled by the Indians themselves. This is indeed a common ground for meeting. I am prepared to cooperate with anybody anywhere on this basis. If the British Government also approached the Indian problem on this basis I have no doubt that a solution would be found, of the nationalist problem at least, without much difficulty. It is



the denial in theory and in practice of the right of Indians to settle their future that has given rise to so much trouble.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 16. On the Agreement with Lancashire Mills<sup>1</sup>

I think I have no right to say anything from the Swadeshi Exhibition platform as I did not take any part in its organization. My non-participation in its activities did not mean that I did not take interest in *swadeshi*. I am very much interested in *swadeshi* but since I am engaged in the struggle for freedom, I feel that I should concentrate my full energy in that struggle and should not divert my attention by associating myself with any other movement, however good it might be for the country.

Of late a question has arisen whether the Indian mill cloth should be allowed to be exhibited and sold in the *swadeshi* exhibitions or not. Some years ago, the Congress issued certificates to the Indian mills on their agreeing to certain conditions, one of which was that they would cooperate in the country's struggle for freedom. About 90 per cent of the mills signed those conditions, but it was discovered subsequently that the proprietors of many of the mills forgot the conditions and acted against them; and the latest instance of their deplorable conduct is the action of the millowners of Bombay in entering into a pact with Lancashire.<sup>2</sup> How far that agreement was fair is not the question, but the mere fact of their entering into a pact with Lancashire when the struggle for freedom was on, amounted to their being opposed to the interests of the country. It is, therefore, necessary that the

1. Speech at the All India Swadeshi Exhibition, Allahabad, 9 November 1933. *The Leader*, 11 November 1933.
2. H.P. Mody, on behalf of the Bombay millowners, signed an agreement with Sir William Clare-Lees, the representative of Lancashire interests. It conceded that India would not seek the same degree of protection against Britain as against other foreign interests and Indian millowners agreed not to make fresh proposals regarding duties on imports of British goods if the general surcharge imposed in October 1931 were removed.

traders dealing in cloth should express their resentment against the act in question of the Bombay millowners.

Such a conduct of the proprietors of the mills has given rise to the question whether mill cloth should be allowed in *swadeshi* exhibitions or not and the Charkha Sangh decided not to permit khaddar *bhandars* to participate in exhibitions, which allowed the sale of mill cloth. But as the Allahabad Swadeshi Committee had already given stalls to the dealers of mill cloth also beforehand, special permission was given to the khaddar *bhandars* to participate in the exhibition this year on the understanding that in future mill cloth would not be allowed in the exhibition.

I am not against the Indian mill cloth or other Indian industries but the point is that those who are opposed to the interests of the country should not be helped.

#### 17. To K.R. Luckmidas<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

November 10, 1933

Dear Mr. Luckmidas,<sup>2</sup>

I have your letter with its enclosures.<sup>3</sup> What I said about the Indian states system represented my exact and well thought-out views on the subject. I do not think the system can be reformed. It must be and will be ended.

As for your scheme of constructive work, I do not think it is possible to undertake any scheme of the kind in the midst of a national struggle of life and death which is going on in India at present.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Editor, *Modern India Thinkers*, (1932).

3. In his letter of 6 November 1933 he suggested a scheme of constructive work such as improving the conditions of the depressed classes and granting financial assistance to educational institutions with the cooperation of the states.



## 18. On the Congress Programme<sup>1</sup>

The programme of the Congress is dynamic enough, but it is perfectly true we are passing through a period of lull and the masses are not participating in direct action. As a matter of fact a large number of persons, far larger than is stated in government statements, have offered civil disobedience in the course of the last two months or so and gone to prison. In the province of Bihar, my information is, and this is not up to date, that over 800 such persons have gone to prison. In the United Provinces and other provinces also, in numerous places individuals continue to offer satyagraha. The number of all these taken together is considerable, but the question of number is not very important at this juncture.

We realise that we cannot suddenly develop a mass movement which can upset the machinery of government. The choice before us and the country is between the struggle even at a low pitch and gradual drifting towards some form of cooperation with government. There is no middle way. So far as the Congress is concerned it is today committed to the former policy and it stands for no compromise with imperialism.

Those who criticise the Congress programme have so far made no suggestion of an effective alternative programme. There are some, of course, who are pining away to enter the stately portals of the council chamber, but we leave these gentlemen out of consideration for the moment because it is obvious that the question does not arise at present and will not arise for some years. The cry that a change of programme is needed means only one thing, that the only programme we have should be scrapped. The slogan that we should fight on all fronts also means just one thing and that is that we should give up the struggle on the front we are fighting. All these are negative policies and cannot even be considered so long as there is any fight in the country.

I should like to assure our friends and critics that there is plenty of fight and life left in large numbers of us and we shall carry on in an aggressive, persistent and defiant way so far as the struggle with imperialism is concerned and that we will not compromise with it. If they can suggest any effective programme of struggle we shall willingly consider it. It is easy enough for those who want a change of programme to take the necessary steps to bring this about. For many weeks I have been inviting them to do so but my invitation has not been accepted.

1. Interview to the press, Allahabad, 11 November 1933. *The Tribune*, 17 November 1933.

**19. To P. Nageswara Rao<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad

14.11.33

Dear Mr. Nageswara Rao,<sup>2</sup>

I have your letter with its enclosures. I do not understand what you mean by asking me to give permission to Mr. Giri to carry on work. He does not require permission from me for any work. He can certainly carry on as he thinks right.

India has entered a certain historical stage in her struggle for freedom. That stage is a revolutionary stage when the usual constitutional and legal activities are not possible. People who talk about these organisational activities do not realise where we stand today.

There is no question of my going on tour all over India. This suggestion itself betrays an ignorance of present-day conditions in India.

Most of my work has been in rural areas. A recent conference of the U.P. Congress workers decided to devote its energies almost entirely to rural areas.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Home Department (Political) File No. 4/19/33, National Archives of India.
2. A resident of Machilipatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

**20. To Mahatma Gandhi<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad

20.11.33

My dear Bapu,

I am sorry for the delay in writing to you. It is difficult to know where to write as you are moving about, and I have recently had a full share of work which has given me no breathing time—meetings, consultations, workers coming, peasants etc., and there is a huge correspondence without any staff to deal with it. I am afraid I am guilty

1. Home Department (Political) File No. 4/19/33, National Archives of India.



or have been guilty of not answering letters promptly and Jamnalalji is entitled to complain. But I thought that my letters to you were bound to be shared by him.

About the Swaraj Bhawan Trust matters<sup>2</sup> you are perfectly right that I should refer to the trustees. It was my intention to do so and I shall now take the necessary steps.

I am very sorry to learn that you cannot find time—except three hours on a Monday afternoon—to give to a consultation with some of us. I suppose we must be content with that. I feel that we must meet to clear up certain matters—not fundamental policies but procedure. I was waiting to hear from Ansari. As he did not write I wired to him and he replied that we might meet on December 4th at Jubbulpore but he preferred December 10th at Delhi. I sent an answer to him that December 4th was late enough and we should meet then. To that I have had no reply. I am now provisionally fixing 4th and informing others accordingly.

As for the A.I.C.C. it still hangs in the air though a requisition is threatened from time to time. I think it will materialise. I feel that you should attend it even though you may not take an active part in it. If necessary your tour programme might be varied to fit in with it. Changes in the programme have already been made and this is not impossible. However it is for you to decide.

I have just received intimation that some old railway and other shares standing in my name have been attached on account of my income tax. The value at par of these shares was about Rs. 20,000. I suppose the present value is much less—probably about 13,000/- or 14,000/-. Previously they had realised other moneys from a sale of a car etc.

I wonder if you have noticed my gentle comment on the Hindu Mahasabha and the still more gentle rejoinder.<sup>3</sup> I have enjoyed them greatly.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

2. Concerning the working and financial position of Swaraj Bhawan Hospital, see *post*, item 95.
3. See *post*, items 77 and 78.

## 21. To Roger Baldwin<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

November 23, 1933

My dear Roger,

It is good to hear from you again after a long interval and I was glad to receive your letter of October 19th together with a copy of the letter you had sent many months ago to Mr. Gandhi.<sup>2</sup>

No arguments of yours are necessary to convince me of the desirability of having a responsible and capable Congress representative in America who can keep in touch with developments in India. I am prepared to do a great deal to bring this about and, if it is at all possible, I shall get it done whenever an opportunity arises.

But I must not give you a wrong impression of what I can do. In regard to this matter we are rather helpless at present. Our organisations and committees are illegal and cannot function normally. This of course does not mean that we cannot function, and this by itself would not be a bar to our taking any step abroad. But this does mean that we have to carry on a hard struggle at home and most of our good people are usually in prison. It is highly unlikely that any prominent colleague of ours would be given passport facilities to go abroad. Then again the censorship of mails makes it difficult to communicate with the outside world.

There is another vital difficulty. The growth of our national movement has reached a stage when it is likely to be in permanent and intensive conflict with imperialism. As the struggle grows more intense the weaker elements fall away and a seeming disruption goes off. As a matter of fact this makes for real strength. But it does create a certain confusion in people's minds. It is a conflict between those who can only work on constitutional and legal lines and those who have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to go ahead within the framework of the existing political order.

That is the political side. Then there is the social and economic aspect. World events as well as our national struggle itself have led to a rapid development of social forces in India. Class cleavages are becoming more apparent. The nationalist ideology is being partly

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. In his letter of 17 February 1933, Baldwin had suggested that a representative of the Congress be sent to the United States.



replaced by a social ideology, generally vague but here and there definite and clear. This also helps to produce cleavages.

You will thus see that we are in a curious state of flux. On the one side the civil disobedience movement is going on, though at a much lower pitch than before, on the other there are various groups pulling in different directions. Ordinarily the full Congress would meet and arrive at a majority decision. But the Congress cannot meet today in a normal manner owing to government restrictions. All attempted meetings have really been occasions for civil disobedience when delegates have been forcibly dispersed by the police or arrested and convicted. It is possible that the All India Congress Committee might meet in the course of the next month and perhaps this will help to clarify the situation. It might on the other hand make the confusion worse confounded.

Under these circumstances it is not easy to say what exactly the Congress would stand for if it has the chance to express its opinion. Mr. Gandhi's recent fasts and decisions have added to the confusion and many of us do not follow his logic or understand his reasoning for them. None the less he remains, as before, the dominating personality so far as the masses are concerned.

Thus the question resolves itself into this. We are not in a position to nominate a person who can be called a representative of the Congress. Even if we could do so, he could only represent one set of opinion in the Congress and anyhow he is not going to be permitted by the British Government to leave India.

I feel that what I have written above will not throw much light on the Indian situation and might even succeed in confusing you more than enlightening you. But the fault lies with the situation itself which is confusing. I look upon all this as a real sign of growth and am in no way perturbed.

My sister got married last month<sup>3</sup> and has gone off to live in Bombay.

With all good wishes,

Ever yours,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. Krishna Nehru was married to G. P. Huthesing on 20 October 1933.

**22. Interview to the Press<sup>1</sup>**

I do not know anything about the letter referred to in the message from Karachi.<sup>2</sup> There can be no question of Gandhiji or my being 'brought round' to call a meeting of the A.I.C.C. because we were 'round' all the time. The meeting would have been held long ago if but a handful of members had asked us to do so. In spite of my repeated invitations for a requisition, I have so far received just one postcard from a member of the A.I.C.C. from Bihar asking me to add his name to a requisition for the meeting. Some others, like Swami Govindananda, have made statements in the press but have not followed it by any written demand to me. I telegraphed to Swami Govindananda asking him to send the requisition even on his own behalf and suggested that names could be separately added to it later, but he has not even acknowledged my letter or telegram. Quite apart from an ordinary requisition, a member of the Working Committee stands on a special footing. He has only to ask me in his individual capacity to summon a meeting and I, as General Secretary, am prepared to do so without any further requisition. I do not see, therefore, why any member of the Working Committee should take the trouble to issue circular letters as mentioned in the Karachi message. All he needs to do is to write or wire to me and his wishes will be fulfilled. I do not know what truth there is in the Karachi message. It seems to me rather extraordinary that any member of the Working Committee should carry on a propaganda in this way behind the back of the executive of which he is a member. It is still more extraordinary for anyone to talk about unanimity over a resolution of the kind suggested in the Karachi message, when it is notorious that such a resolution is not only against the present policy of the Congress for which, in theory at least, the Working Committee is responsible but which has also been openly supported by large numbers of prominent Congressmen. If anyone, whether he is a member of the Working Committee or not,

1. Allahabad, 23 November 1933. *The Leader*, 25 November 1933.

2. A press report from Karachi on 24 November 1933, based on letters from Nariman to prominent Congressmen, stated that Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal had been 'brought round' to call a meeting of the A.I.C.C. the following month.



is labouring under this delusion I can only say that he is grievously mistaken and will have a rude awakening.

Again I repeat that the meeting of the A.I.C.C. will be convened as soon as a requisition reaches me or even a single member of the Working Committee demands it.

Question: Can't you, as General Secretary, convene a meeting of the A.I.C.C. on your initiative?

Jawaharlal Nehru: Of course under the constitution a member of the Working Committee cannot force the hands of the General Secretary in this way but I do not wish to stand on legal formalities or to raise any obstructions in the way of those who desire a change in the programme of the Congress. But I do feel that the initiative should come from those who desire such a change and not from me when I am not in favour of the change. I trust that any A.I.C.C. member who wants this change will take the obvious and the normal course of asking me to convene the meeting instead of avoiding the step and criticising me for his own avoidance and also at the same time carrying on a propaganda which is not very fair to the Working Committee and is obviously subversive of discipline and organised activity.

### 23. To the Editor, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

November 24, 1933

Sir,

I feel that you have done me, perhaps unwittingly, an injustice in a reference to me in your leading article of November 23rd.<sup>2</sup> You say that "Pandit Jawaharlal seems to think that those who think in terms

1. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 28 November 1933.
2. The editorial demanded that Jawaharlal call the A.I.C.C. on his own initiative. It could either endorse the present Congress policy, or lead to the abandoning of individual civil disobedience, which in any case served only to put the Congress under an official ban.

of revolutionary change should not object to such secret functioning of the Congress." The average reader will naturally think that you have quoted my words within the inverted commas. As a matter of fact I never said anything about secret functioning, and even an inference was unjustified. What I said in the course of an article<sup>3</sup> was as follows.

People forget sometimes that we are functioning abnormally. They discuss the constitutional issue in terms of normality or they criticise the Congress for its seeming inactivity, forgetting that the Congress has arrived at a certain stage of historical growth. It is not at present a constitutional or legal body and many of the safe and brave deeds that are performed on public platforms are no longer in its line. Constitutionalist naturally dislike this; they cannot function in an illegal atmosphere. But why should those who think in terms of revolutionary change object to this inevitable and desirable development?

I was not thinking at all of any secret activity when I wrote this. I was merely pointing out that when a national movement grows it reaches a stage when it must cease to be a constitutional movement, in the limited and governmental sense of the word, and come into conflict with various laws made to suppress it. Having arrived at that stage it cannot go back except by rendering itself wholly ineffective. My argument was addressed to the 'left' or advanced socialist criticism of some of my previous articles.

About the A.I.C.C. meeting may I inform you that in spite of my repeatedly declaring that I await a requisition or even separate signatures for a requisition, I have so far received only one postcard from a member in Bihar asking me to add his name to a requisition. Not a single other member has written to me definitely about it. Some individual members have certainly made statements in the press but they have refrained from following them up by accepting my invitation to write to me formally. Swami Govindananda, to give an instance, has made more than one press statement, and I wired and wrote to him to send me his requisition or even separate names for a requisition. But he has not even acknowledged my telegram or letter. I really fail to understand this extraordinary modesty and reluctance

3. See *ante*, section 1, item 3.



to adopt the natural and normal course. There seems to be some mystery about it. Is it that our friends who sometimes talk of the desirability of an A.I.C.C. meeting really do not want it?

Bengal's quota of A.I.C.C. members is 48. Even some of these members, if they were so inclined, could send me the requisition. Why has not one of them written to me on the subject though I have invited them to do so? Perhaps, Sir, it might be worthwhile for you to try to convert some of our Bengal colleagues of the A.I.C.C. to your viewpoint.

I might repeat what I have already stated separately that I shall also convene an A.I.C.C. meeting if a single member of the Working Committee desires me to do so. The constitution may not compel me to do so but the wishes of a Working Committee colleague naturally weigh with me, as General Secretary, and I shall carry them out.

So far, however, the position is this: I have only a postcard from Bihar, and with all respect to the member who sent it, a single postcard is hardly evidence of a passionate desire among A.I.C.C. members to have a meeting.

Yours etc.,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

#### 24. To Members of the A.I.C.C.<sup>1</sup>

Dear Comrade,

Some controversy has arisen about the desirability of holding a meeting of the All India Congress Committee, and I venture to address you on the subject so that you may be informed of the existing position. Ordinarily it would have been my duty and privilege to convene such a meeting as we have not met for a long time now and much has happened during the past two years which demands attention. But as you are aware we are not living under normal conditions. A national struggle is being carried on and the Congress organisation

1. Allahabad, 24 November 1933. *The Tribune*, 26 November 1933.

has been functioning in an abnormal manner. Under these circumstances the responsibility for convening or not convening a meeting of the A.I.C.C. seemed to me to be a great one and naturally I took the advice of respected colleagues. The advice was conflicting. Under these circumstances it seemed to me, as General Secretary, to be the right course to leave the decision and initiative in the hands of the members themselves.

The constitutional way of doing so was to invite a requisition from thirty members as laid down by our rules. I made repeated statements in the press suggesting that such a requisition might be sent to me by those who desire a meeting to be held. In order to remove any technical difficulties in their way I went so far to suggest that individual members of the A.I.C.C. might send me their signatures separately. In spite of this invitation no requisition has been sent to me and only one solitary member from Bihar has written to me asking that his name might be added to any requisition that might be received.

I have further made it clear that if even a single member of the Working Committee wants me to convene the A.I.C.C., I shall do so in deference to the wishes of a respected colleague. This is the position.

I have not desired, and I do not desire, to place the slightest obstruction in the way of those who wish to have a meeting under the peculiar circumstances of today. I wished to have the direction of A.I.C.C. members themselves in the matter and I have made the path clear for such direction.

We do not wish to enter into the controversial aspects of the question or of vital issues that the A.I.C.C. may have to consider when it meets. My function, as General Secretary of the A.I.C.C. and a member of the Congress executive, is to carry out the Congress policy and take my directions from the majority of the members of the A.I.C.C. I trust that other members will also avoid a needless and harmful controversy. It is possible that many members have changed their addresses during this long period. Many are in prison. I shall be grateful if those who are in a position to do so will intimate to me their correct addresses.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru



**25. To Rev. Dan Singh Chowdhury<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad

November 24, 1933

Dear Mr. Chowdhury,

Thank you for your letter and good wishes. It may be that merely courting imprisonment does not carry us far. But it seems to me that we have arrived at a stage when every effective action involves the risk of imprisonment. To avoid that risk leads to ineffectiveness.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

**26. To Rangildas M. Kapadia<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad

November 24, 1933

Dear Mr. Kapadia,<sup>2</sup>

Forgive me for the delay in answering your letter. I was glad to read about your general views on the political situation. This situation seems a little complex and confusing but essentially it is clear enough. The very fact that it appears confusing is a sign of growth. We are growing out of a narrow and purely nationalist ideology.

My mother is better now and she is making slow progress.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Editor, *The States People*, the journal of the All India States' People's Conference.

**27. Speech to the Kanpur Swadeshi League<sup>1</sup>**

It is not without hesitation that I have accepted the invitation of the Swadeshi League to visit the exhibition and to receive a welcome address. I have no time to waste over *swadeshi* exhibitions but that does not mean that I have no sympathies with the aims and objects of the Swadeshi League. There is one thing which is very much responsible for my taking no part in the Swadeshi League movement and the Swadeshi League exhibition. That one thing is the presence of the mill cloth shops in the exhibition. I want you to remember those days when the satyagraha movement was at its height and the millowners willingly or unwillingly had to sign the Congress pledge to the effect that they would do their best to promote the cause of Indian nationalism. Now as the Congress fight has become a bit slack they have taken advantage of it and have not only broken their pledges which they had given upon their word of honour but have also begun to do things and enter into agreements which are directly opposed to the interests of the country.

I wish to point out to you the recent agreement entered into by the Millowners' Association represented by Mr. Mody on the one hand and the Lancashire Mill Association on the other hand. I recall those days when Mr. Mody visited my place often for certain alterations in the Congress pledge. Those days were when the Congress programme of foreign cloth boycott was at its height and Mr. Mody would not have dared to enter into such treacherous agreements as he has done recently. All these things are responsible for my attitude in treating the mill cloth on the same footing as any other foreign cloth. Consequently I do not subscribe to the policy of encouraging exhibitions where mill cloth is allowed either for sale or for display. I have no sympathy for millowners. They try to fill their pockets at the expense of labourers.

1. 30 November 1933. From *The Searchlight*, 6 December 1933.



## 28. Address to the Students of Kanpur<sup>1</sup>

I have lost all interest in the student movement because students have become unresponsive to the national call. University education is making them dull-headed to a large extent. The present system of education blocks all mental progress. There is a need for young men to keep themselves awake to what is happening in the world. Indian colleges and schools are like monasteries, where monks and nuns live a secluded life knowing nothing about the world. This condition is most unhealthy. I would like the students to keep open the windows of their minds so that light from all sides of the world might enter.

1. 30 November 1933. From *The Leader*, 3 December 1933.

## 29. To Lala Dunichand<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
December 2, 1933

My dear Lala Dunichand,  
I have your letter together with your suggestions for a new programme.<sup>2</sup> I am afraid I do not agree with you in some of the things that you have said. I think that every form of effective activity today immediately brings one into conflict with the government. Thus every person who wants to do effective work must inevitably take the risk of going to prison. Those who avoid that risk cannot do any effective work.

I do not remember exactly the statement I made at Lahore about our fight lasting two years or so. If I did so, events have shown that my forecast was not correct but all I could have meant was that a particular phase of struggle would probably last two years. It has in fact lasted longer.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. 10/1933, p. 59, N.M.M.L. The letter is incomplete.

2. Lala Dunichand had suggested the suspension of civil disobedience and the convening of the A.I.C.C.



It is true that there is a great deal of political depression in the country at present but I do not think that conditions are quite so bad as you suggest. We are passing through an inevitable period of lull. It is perfectly true that under present conditions the existing programme of the Congress is not attractive or dynamic in the sense that it moves large numbers. No programme can be dynamic during a period of depression. But there can be programmes which are potentially dynamic and which can develop rapidly as soon as conditions change. I think the Congress programme of direct action has that potentiality in it....

### 30. On the Repressive Policy of Government<sup>1</sup>

So long as the bread and unemployment problems of the millions of poverty-stricken peasants and educated youth remain unsolved, the freedom fight cannot be stopped even by Mahatma Gandhi.

I admit the temporarily prevailing dullness but am satisfied at the public zeal, activity and enthusiasm, considering the same as the very sign of Congress immortality. Although the continuous ordinance regime has paralysed the fight for freedom and outward activities it has failed to kill the Congress, which still breathes.

The present fight has taught us to distinguish between the true patriots and black legs who in peace time posed as nationalists but deserted the camp when the fight began.

I am sure the country's prestige will never be lowered and the flag will fly as high as ever.

1. Speech in reply to the address of welcome presented by the Jabalpur Municipality, 5 December 1933. From *The Leader*, 7 December 1933.

### 31. Interview at Allahabad<sup>1</sup>

It is a wrong impression that appears to have been formed in the public mind, that the meeting was held at Jubbulpore principally to

1. 7 December 1933. From *The Hindu*, 7 December 1933.



discuss the question of holding a meeting of the All India Congress Committee. The meeting was held simply to enable some friends to see one another and to exchange views on some important matters. For instance, I had not met Maulana Abul Kalam Azad since his release from jail, and the Jubbulpore meeting brought us together.

### 32. Statement to the Press<sup>1</sup>

A casual remark made in lighter vein by Gandhiji has apparently been taken very seriously by the gentlemen of the press. At a meeting of Delhi Congress workers, when Gandhiji was pressed for time and had to go away and many questions were still being put to him, he remarked that these questions might be put to me, as he had given a general power of attorney to me. This remark has been given prominence in the press and all sorts of inferences have been drawn from it. As a matter of fact it has little significance. Gandhiji has been pleased to make similar remarks about me and others on many previous occasions. Even leaders of great movements must be permitted to relax occasionally and indulge in humour.

The Congress is not something that can be handed over by anybody to anyone else. Gandhiji no doubt is our respected leader and I have the honour to be the General Secretary of the Congress. As such, I have certain duties to perform and Gandhiji referred to these in his remarks.

1. Allahabad, 16 December 1933. *The Tribune*, 18 December 1933.

### 33. On Arrests of Congressmen in the U.P.<sup>1</sup>

The recent convictions of some Congressmen in Allahabad,<sup>2</sup> Shri Sheo Murti Singh, Shri Feroze Gandhi<sup>3</sup> and others, for alleged no-rent

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 25 December 1933. *The Leader*, 28 December 1933.
2. Feroze Gandhi was arrested on 8 December 1933 and Sheo Murti Singh on 13 December 1933 for "instigating" people not to pay rent and taxes. Both denied the charge of instigation but were sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment each.
3. (1912-1960); married Indira Nehru, 1942; member, Lok Sabha, 1952-60.



activities raise interesting issues and throw a revealing light on the mentality and attitude of the British authorities. Convictions of Congressmen have been common enough for many years and those who defy the law do so with a full knowledge of the consequences. But often enough these convictions are brought about in such a manner as to deserve public notice and the recent convictions are particularly deserving of this notice. My colleague, Shri Purushottamdas Tandon has already drawn attention to Shri Sheo Murti Singh's case. His argument is further strengthened by Shri Feroze Gandhi's case.

In both the cases there was a clear denial on the part of the parties concerned and they said that they had not preached non-payment of rent or revenue as this formed no part of the present Congress programme. Congressmen do not usually hide their light or their programme under a bushel and when non-payment of rent and revenue was their programme they proclaimed it openly enough. When this part of the programme was given up or suspended they proclaimed this fact also openly. It is obvious that such programmes are mass programmes and are not and cannot be confined to individual effort. The trying magistrate accepted the fact that the no-rent campaign was no part of the present Congress programme. But he preferred to believe the halting statement of a shivering and frightened *chowkidar* (who could not even recognize Feroze Gandhi) and another village witness in the face of the clear denials of responsible and well-known public workers. I suppose he is entitled to believe or disbelieve any witness however unreasonable this may appear to be. We have grown accustomed to this, and certainly no Congressman complains of being sentenced and sent to prison. We have trained ourselves for that and prison has become a part of the day's work.

But what deserves notice is this: under cover of stopping a no-rent campaign every other activity in the villages is attempted to be stopped. The law as it prevails in our province may be bad enough but where even this extraordinary legislation does not go far enough, it is extended to meet every contingency. It is so easy to put up a couple of policemen or village folk to say that a certain person said that rent or revenue should not be paid. It is immaterial what they actually said or did. The weapon is good enough for any purpose.

Thus we have it that any activity, any approach to the rural areas, is to be stopped by the plea that it is part of the no-rent campaign. Congressmen do not mind this for they will carry on their work and willingly face the consequences. And on no account will they leave their helpless and downtrodden village comrades in the lurch. But it is well for the public to realise the inner significance of the action taken



by the government or the local authorities. It is clear that the official world is mightily afraid of the truth reaching the rural areas and wishes to isolate them from the rest of the world and prevent them from organising and thus to hold them in its grip.

#### 34. Message to the Rajputana States' People's Convention<sup>1</sup>

Recent events in India and England have made it clear that all the reactionary forces, British and Indian, are combining together to prevent or delay the freedom of the Indian people. These forces have tried to suppress our freedom movement and the White Paper is an attempt to consolidate the hold of all these vested interests. Nothing is more significant than the utterly reactionary attitude of the Indian princes and the backing it received from the government.

It is probable that free India will be a federation but it is quite certain that nothing even remotely resembling freedom can come out of the federation that has been suggested in the White Paper. This proposed federation is merely meant to prevent India's growth and enchain her still further to feudal and out of date systems. It is quite impossible to progress from this federation to freedom without breaking the federation to pieces.

It seems to me, therefore, that all of us, whether in the Indian states or the rest of India, must appreciate this position clearly and realise that our only course is to reject utterly any such bogus federation. We must stick to the completest form of independence which means complete absence of foreign control as well as a fully democratic form of government. The Indian states system, as it exists today, must go root and branch. There can be no compromise with these relics of a barbarous age.

Your convention will deal with many matters of present-day importance such as the States' Protection Bill<sup>2</sup> and the repression that is going on in the Indian states. These loom large before you but they are, after all, the inevitable products of the system as it exists today. Therefore,

1. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 1 January 1934; reprinted in *Recent Essays and Writings*, (Allahabad, 1934), pp. 138-139. The convention was held in Beawar on 29 December 1933.
2. This bill sought to prevent criticism in British Indian newspapers, of the administration in Indian states and entry of demonstrators into the states.



I hope, you will frame your objective clearly and uncompromisingly and draw up your programme accordingly.

The struggle of the Indian states' people is peculiar to them but essentially it has a great deal in common with the national struggle for Indian freedom. And this national struggle again has much in common with the world struggle for the freedom of the oppressed and exploited. I hope your convention will take the larger viewpoint and face the issues bravely, taking up the side of those oppressed and exploited everywhere.

### 35. To Sri Prakasa<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

Jan. 11, 1934

My dear Prakasa,

Your letter has just reached me and I hasten to reply so that Nageshar can go back by the day train.

I am sorry we could not have a fuller talk when you were here. But your letter has made the position clear. It was not quite clear to me when the question of secretaryship arose.<sup>2</sup> I had not previously thought of your undertaking the job at present but when your name was proposed and you were agreeable, I concluded that you were willing to shoulder the burden and the inevitable risk involved. That risk followed from your acceptance of the office, not from the subsequent publication of your name. Under the circumstances it would have been better for you to keep out of office for there can be no mere figure-heads today and even figure-heads have to face the risk, sometimes even more so than others who work in the background. I appreciate your difficulties. The difficulties are personal in the case of each one of us but essentially they are impersonal. We are all crushed in the mill of existing conditions—most of us, like the peasantry who suffer most, are unwilling victims. But willing or unwilling, they get crushed and there is no way out for them except the way of revolution. Revolutions occur because of this. Some of us have a

1. Sri Prakasa Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. Sri Prakasa was the general secretary of the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee from 1928, but now wished to relinquish it for personal reasons.



little choice left to us, though it is little enough. We can avoid immediate trouble sometimes, though not always. The question therefore that each one has to consider, leaving out the larger issues, is how are we going to face the issue—defensively or aggressively, unwillingly or willingly. The result from the personal point of view is much the same. Ultimately the decision is not the result of pure logic but of instinct or the inner urge. Each person will answer according to his or her temperament and each one will have to answer for himself or herself.

In Bengal today it is hardly possible for anyone to be even quietly sympathetic with the national movement. They are forced to repudiate it openly, to salute the Union Jack, to offer welcomes and *dalis* to British troops, and to humiliate themselves in a variety of ways. This will happen in the rest of India also and the more defensive we are the sooner will it happen. What then are we to do? To retract and recant and forswear? We may not be faced with this alternative today but to some extent it is there even now. The choice is clear-cut and it is becoming increasingly difficult to remain in the middle.

I think the best course for you now would be to carry on for the next month in an unobtrusive way. You can see that the office papers and accounts are put in proper order. For the rest Ramsaran<sup>3</sup> should do the active work. If you do not indulge in any overt act I do not think that there is much chance of your being arrested. An odd risk of course is always there. At the end of the month, when there is another meeting, you might explain your position frankly and ask to be relieved of the secretaryship. Absolute frankness, I think, is best and we who have been associated with each other for so many years can fully appreciate each other's difficulties.

As for the new arrangements, I doubt if it will be desirable to make Mohanlal secretary as soon as he comes out of prison. Of course he will work and help in a variety of ways, but he should be given some chance of looking round before he goes back again. It is obvious that the person who takes up the secretaryship must be prepared to go off to prison at any moment. He cannot be a secret secretary. He has to announce the fact and face the consequences.

I feel that under the circumstances Narendra Deva might be asked to take up the secretaryship (in spite of my jocular remark to the contrary). He may not be able to travel about much but otherwise

3. A Congress worker of Moradabad; joined Kashi Vidyapith in 1923 as professor of economics; member, U.P. Legislative Assembly, 1937-52; member, Lok Sabha, 1952-62.



he ought to be an excellent choice. He can be helped of course by Ramsaran and Birbal Singh.<sup>4</sup> You might speak to Narendra Deva about this and tell him of my suggestion. It is unlikely that I shall be available for the next meeting.

As for myself, please do not trouble yourself, and ask Shiva Prasad not to do so. I am quite clear as to what I should do and this gives me peace of mind. I have been perfectly prepared to go back to prison from the day of my discharge. Now, I am not only prepared but I am eager to do so. My instinct tells me that I must take a step forward and instinct in this matter is a safe guide for me.

Few things have pleased me in recent months quite so much as the riddance of the jewellery.<sup>5</sup> I have developed a horror of such things and I would prefer throwing them away to keeping them. It is true that we have sold them at a fraction of the original price. That was inevitable.

I am afraid I cannot offer you any useful advice about your boys' education. Even in normal times this is a difficult enough problem, now it is almost insoluble, at any rate satisfactorily. Greenlees is a curious person and he seems to have got stuck up in the C.P. I cannot say how suitable he is for the work you have. Perhaps he might be good at it. But for the moment he seems to be out of reach. Your idea of starting a school is a good one if it can be arranged. Only, such undertakings absorb so much time and energy.

The school Indira is at in Vile Parle, Bombay, is fairly good but being a small private affair it is expensive. The monthly bill, including board and some extra tuition, comes up to about Rs. 100/-. The boarding part is the expensive part. Good food is given and there is plenty of attention. The people who run it are not only nationalists but socialists and some modern methods of teaching are employed, such as the pupils being taken individually and helped to grow mentally. Examinations are not stressed, though, when necessary, they are kept in view. If you sent your two boys there the expense would probably be about Rs. 160/- a month but I am not sure. Then there would be travelling expenses during holidays etc. If you like you can write direct and enquire from Jahangir J. Vakil, Pupils' Own School, 22 Ghorbunder Road, Vile Parle, via Bombay.

4. (b. 1899); participated in noncooperation movement; member, U.P. Legislative Assembly, 1937-52; and Lok Sabha, 1952-57.

5. In his *Autobiography* Jawaharlal wrote, "To improve the immediate financial situation we decided to sell off my wife's jewellery, the silver and other similar articles that we possessed."



I am glad you wrote to me fully and frankly. I appreciate your position thoroughly and I am only sorry that I was partly responsible for placing you in an awkward position.

Love,

Yours affly.,  
Jawaharlal

### 36. A Shadow Conference<sup>1</sup>

Some friends have asked me for my opinion on the proposed "All Parties Conference" which has been suggested in Bombay. I should have thought that so far as Congressmen were concerned, or those who think along Congress lines, there was no room for doubt. We stand for independence and the fullest self-determination by the people of India without any interference by an alien authority. It is obvious that any attempt to consider the White Paper and to try to improve it, is incompatible with independence and self-determination. It is also incompatible with what is termed Dominion Status or even a small measure of political or economic freedom. Only those who are prepared to give up their oft-repeated objective, forget their pledges, and accept, not for today and tomorrow but for the distant future, the steel chains of British imperialism and political and financial and military control, can discuss the White Paper and its offshoots. For Congressmen and others who work for a fundamental change in India there is going to be no compromise on this issue whatever happens. For them therefore to associate themselves with any attempt to modify the White Paper would be a betrayal of all they stand for and a strengthening of the reactionary elements in the country. Whatever the motives of those who are sponsoring the so-called All Parties Conference may be, there can be no doubt to any political realist that their action is harmful to the country and in the interests of British imperialism.

The White Paper, even with all the modifications that have been suggested by its liberal critics, would be worthy only of the waste-paper basket, where no doubt it will find a refuge sooner or later. But

1. Statement to the press, 11 January 1934. *The Tribune*, 13 January 1934.

it is well known that no modifications are likely to materialize and yet those very gentlemen who tell us so, meet together solemnly to discuss modifications. Self-deception could hardly go further; or is it that their urge somehow to cooperate with British imperialism is so great that it dims their vision?

It seems to me clear that between those who continuously think of this cooperation and are always prepared to submit to every decision of the ruling power, and those who aim at independence, there is nothing in common. What are we to discuss if we meet together?

Some newspapers, who have done me the honour of publishing my recent article on the constituent assembly, have put me a question. All this is very well, they say, but what of the present? I am afraid I can give no answer that can satisfy those who can think or act only in terms of an impotent constitutionalism. Constitutionalism is dead and worms have already been at it and there is going to be no resurrection. Not even the National Congress can revive it by resolution for we have passed that historical stage of growth. Every national movement, every social movement, when it is strong enough to endanger the existing order, passes that stage and cannot go back, though individuals and groups may collapse or retire. An impasse is created and this continues till the existing order breaks down. To suggest that the impasse should be resolved by an attempt to revive the corpse of constitutionalism is to ignore both historical precedent and existing facts, for the conditions that created the impasse continue and function more intensely and thus bring about a worse impasse. The only way out is to struggle through to the other side. Therefore the only possible answer to the question, 'What of the present?' is: Carry on the struggle for freedom without compromise or going back or faltering.

No person who understands the implications of a constituent assembly imagines that it can meet under the distinguished patronage of the British Government. Its patrons can only be the people of India. And because today the Indian people are held down by the imperialist machine, speaking and writing and meeting and the press are suppressed and only a faithful echo of our rulers' wishes is permitted, there can be no constituent assembly. It will come in good time when the Indian people gain the upper hand. Not till then. And meanwhile all talk of "All Parties Conference" and "Conventions" is so much shadow talk not even resulting in shadow action.



### 37. On Social and Village Uplift Work<sup>1</sup>

I find from some newspapers that I am supposed to have recommended social and village uplift work to my colleagues and that I myself propose to indulge in this activity. I have no such ambition nor have my colleagues of the United Provinces. This kind of safe and pious activity can well be left to old ladies. My colleagues and I work for the freedom of India and for the ending of all political and economic domination of the Indian masses, and we are prepared for the consequences of our action. We do not believe in safety first.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 12 January 1934. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 13 January 1934.

### 38. Interview to the Press<sup>1</sup>

Question: What is the object of your visit to Calcutta?

Jawaharlal Nehru: I have come to Calcutta partly because of my wife's ill-health in order to consult doctors and partly to meet old friends and colleagues to find out how matters stand in Bengal. We in other provinces feel keenly the misfortunes of our countrymen in Bengal, although the whole country is at present in the grip of repression of the severest type. There is no doubt that Bengal has had to bear the brunt of this in common with the North West Frontier Province. I should like to convey to our brothers and sisters of Bengal, in so far as a single individual can do so, how very much the rest of India is watching with anxious interest the happenings in Bengal and how much they desire to show their solidarity with this province.

1. Calcutta, 16 January 1934. From *Advance*, 17 January 1934.

Q: Does not the present-day talk of internationalism stand in the way of our national struggle for freedom?

JN: That all depends on what one means by internationalism. I am myself a convinced internationalist because the world today is international in character and I do not think it is possible for nations in these days to function separately. There is an attempt at present at what is called economic internationalism, but I doubt very much if it can succeed. I think any attempt to reduce the international character of the world is a step backward; progress can only come through more and more internationalism. But there can be no real internationalism unless the component parts are entirely free. Therefore, the essential preliminary to internationalism is the ending of all foreign exploitation of one nation by another.

So far as we are concerned it is folly to talk of internationalism when our country is dependent and exploited. Only an independent India can take an effective part in an international order. Thus though we must look forward to an international order, we can only reach it by achieving national independence first. Any talk of internationalism, which ignores this issue, is merely weak and sentimental talk which means nothing at all. It may even result in further exploitation of India by the international organisations. Thus the League of Nations, which is supposed to be an international organisation, but is really controlled by a few governments of great powers, in effect, helps and tries to perpetuate the exploitation of subject nations.

Q: What do you think of the Harijan movement?

JN: There can be no two opinions about the desirability of putting an end to all such things as untouchability and the like, and because the Harijan movement aims at this it must be welcome. Personally, as I consider the political struggle to be of great importance, I devote all my energies to that as well as to the economic struggle.

Q: Would you please give a message for young Bengal?

JN: My message to young Bengal is the same message that I wish to give to the whole of India. All of us stand or fall together, or, to quote a famous writer, "Let us hang together or else we hang separately." The struggle must and will be carried on and young Bengal will, I have no doubt, play the same leading part in it as old Bengal has done in the past.



The problem of India is one and indivisible. It cannot be separated into provinces, or even as between Indian states and the rest of India. The sorrows and misfortunes of one province are the sorrows and misfortunes of the whole of India, likewise the triumph of one province is the triumph of all India. Therefore, though we may function in separate areas and spheres we work for the same ideal, namely, the salvation of the motherland.

Q: When are you going to Santiniketan and how long do you propose to stay there?

JN: I propose leaving for Santiniketan on the 19th instant, and the object of my visit is to pay my respects to the Poet.

Q: Is there not a danger that a large number of communalists will come in and spoil the object of the constituent assembly which you are ushering in?

JN: There is certainly the chance of some communalists coming in but they will undoubtedly find themselves in a minority and will be consequently powerless to act contrary to the country's interests. The majority of members of such an assembly elected on the largest franchise must necessarily be men who will be more representative in character than the so-called members of any self-styled group or party as they will have to come through the votes of the starving masses who will make it a point to see that their interests are safeguarded.

### 39. The Character of the National Struggle<sup>1</sup>

Mr. President and Friends,

Chance has brought me to Calcutta to be present at this meeting today. I welcomed that chance because I wished to associate myself with this meeting and when I was invited I gladly acceded to that request—not, I take it, that it was necessary for me or for any person coming from

1. Speech at the Albert Hall, Calcutta, 17 January 1934. This and the following item are based on reports of the speeches prepared by police reporters and filed at Jawaharlal's trial on 12 February 1934.



outside Bengal to assure you that we feel with you and that I am entirely at one with you on this question. But, still, I think it was desirable that someone should tell you something of the feelings of other people too, who live in the other provinces of India in regard to what is happening in Bengal, and I think, although I speak as an individual, I may well claim to represent the feelings of other people in other provinces and specially I think I claim to represent the feelings of my own colleagues of U.P. And I tell you that when the news of these occurrences at Midnapur, Chittagong and other places came to us, it filled us with anger—flaming and blazing anger—which finds a very poor echo, if I may say so, in the resolution that has been put before you.<sup>2</sup> There is nothing wrong in the resolution. I am not saying that the resolution is not correct but somehow I have been feeling so, sitting here and partly following the speeches and partly not, because to my misfortune I do not know your beautiful language well enough to follow it—but I have been thinking all this time about this attempt of an arrogant imperialist power to humiliate us—mind you, not the city of Midnapur, not the few people of Midnapur—to humiliate not Bengal but the whole of India—because it is a matter of the utmost humiliation to every Indian from Khyber Pass to Cape Comorin—how are we to meet this arrogant attempt? It is right that you and I should protest, and protest vehemently; and yet one feels a sense of helplessness and one's anger reacts and makes one fret and the desire to seek a remedy forces one to think as to what one should do. After all, you may here pass this resolution and perhaps appoint a committee to investigate and suggest measures, but do you feel that you have to meet something that is bigger than a mere resolution—something that requires more than a resolution of protest—something really that is beyond the power of individuals who may come in your way and touch you, because, remember, it is not a question of certain individuals in Midnapur or certain individuals in other parts of Bengal, of a certain individual whether he is the Governor or a constable—it is not a question of these people ill-treating you but it is ultimately a question of a system, a cruel and a vicious system that afflicts you, and anybody that fits himself into this system whether he may be His Excellency the Governor of Bengal or the *panch* or the *chowkidar*—they are all screws of the same machine. It is the machine that crushes you and crushes India. That is the problem before you. Why not face it and understand it? You simply pass a resolution of protest and you go to that machine and ask for redress—go to them and tell them that 'you are ill-treating us' Do you think

2. The resolution protesting against the "enforced saluting of the Union Jack".



that is consistent with your dignity? I have nothing to do with that. If you have any self-respect, seek a remedy with your own strength and your own people.

The other day I read and took the trouble to read 5 columns of a speech that was delivered by the commissioner of Burdwan—Mr. Burrows.<sup>3</sup> I was glad I read it because it was a most extraordinary and most amazing document that I ever came across. I felt when I read it what an excellent thing it would be for some nationalist organisation to publish it in a pamphlet form for wide distribution. I hope the suggestion will be taken up by somebody or perhaps by the committee you appoint, because that speech as well as other speeches display the mentality—the brutal, disgusting, vulgar mentality—which governs India today. It is well that you and I should understand the mentality which controls the destiny of India, and, after all, it is not the fault of that gentleman Mr. Burrows—he is again but a cog in the machine. What is he to do? He simply moves with the machine. He may be perhaps a little less discreet, a little more given to fits of nerves—but whatever the reason, I tell you that what he said does represent today the mentality of the power that governs us. And not only that, but look around you again—look at this, a friend of ours was just complaining against the nationalist papers in Calcutta.<sup>4</sup> Well, I am not in a position to judge. I have not been able to read these papers for a long time, but we had the honour and the privilege, even in the jails of U.P., to be supplied with some other papers of Calcutta and even outside the jails I had occasion to read them. The extraordinary manner in which they sometimes treat us and the way in which they justify it, is really an eye-opener. It is not a question of nationalism or imperialism. To any man with the least sensitivity, with the least education, with the least culture, it comes as a shock that people claiming to be above ordinary vulgarity, should behave in this manner. That is what we find in Bengal and the rest of India in a greater or lesser measure. It is an extraordinary vulgarity of imperialism. Why is that so? Because imperialism of today, in spite of the strength that it seems to possess, is in a tottering condition, and when a great system like this totters, when it is afraid of falling, then it loses all control, its culture

3. L.D. Burrows stated on 10 December 1933 that, owing to a lack of strong public opinion, the government had to rely on their own resources to fight terrorism.

4. The reference was to a young man who complained against the nationalist papers of Calcutta for not publishing the news of the rough handling of an Indian girl by the management of the Hagenbeck circus.



and education and everything else goes. It becomes vulgar and it becomes abusive. That is the position today. Of course, do not think that it is going to collapse suddenly, but these are the signs of a decadent system. That system is utterly decadent. Therefore you find utter cruelty, utter vandalism. That is what is happening specially in Bengal and the Frontier Province.

Well, a friend has suggested that there should be, as far as I can understand his Bengali, an All India agitation over this. Undoubtedly it would be a very good thing if there was an All India agitation over this, but I feel that he is missing a point. If by agitation is meant public meetings and the like and the passing of resolutions, it does seem to fall very much short of the mark, because agitation is meant to impress the will of the people on an individual or government. But when that individual or government becomes utterly callous and utterly shameless, without any care as to what people think of it, in fact when it loses all sense of decency, then you have to think what other effective means you can adopt to impress your will. Ultimately you arrive at the same question, which is the final question so far as we are concerned: what are the means to enforce the will of the Indian people in Bengal, in Midnapur, in India? That is the final question and there is no half-way house to it. You cannot stop half-way, because today the two forces in India—imperialism and nationalism—have come to close grips. When two forces are in close grip then there is no giving way on either side. Then you miss gentle chivalry. That chivalry, to some extent, our movement has attempted. Our leader has constantly reminded us not to forget that chivalry and the basis of our movement has been, to a large extent, chivalrous. Of course, it would be vain to deny that we are moved with extreme anger on occasions. But so far as the imperial power is concerned, there is no doubt that it has given up all pretences of chivalry. Therefore, do not expect anything from appeals to chivalry or appeals to justice or the like. We are today in the midst of a historic struggle, which all nations have to face at a particular time and from that there is only one escape—victory of one side or the other. I hope you will realise that and work for that.



#### 40. The Futility of Terrorism and the Nature of the Mass Movement<sup>1</sup>

Young men and women of Bengal,  
 You have just been reminded of an occasion over two years ago when I addressed you in this very hall.<sup>2</sup> My mind travels back to that time, two and a quarter years ago and then I think of what has taken place during this long interval. Two years is not a very long period of time even in the life of an individual, much less in the life of a nation. But sometimes the years drag themselves out and even a year or a month seems to be an enormous period of time, and these two years have been long years. Through these two years we have experienced moments of exultation and we have experienced also moments of depression. We have gone through, as all great movements must go through, the valley of the shadows; and we are yet in these valleys and no one can say when we shall be able to emerge from them into the light of freedom. So I thought of these two years with varying emotions, I thought of the great things that we had accomplished in this country, I also thought of the many weaknesses that are ours still, for, after all, whatever we may have failed to accomplish, is ultimately and fundamentally due to our own weakness.

I have been asked by a friend who has preceded me to endeavour to inspire you—well, I do not know if it is in my capacity to inspire anybody by any words that I might use, but it seems to me that if anyone has survived and is surviving the various events that are happening in India and has failed to be inspired by them to action, it will be very difficult for him to be moved by any words of any individual.

What do you see in India today? What do you see in the world today? And what do you see in your own province of Bengal? You see an amazing number of problems—you see the greater statesmen of the world lost in a morass, in a fog and not knowing how to come out of it. Do you know that in the course of the last fifteen years or so, roughly, I believe, 133 world conferences have taken place in order to solve the various problems which afflict the world and each one of these 133 conferences has been a total failure? Why was that so? Not because the people who met there did not want to succeed

1. Address to the students of Bengal at the Albert Hall, Calcutta, 18 January 1934.

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 300-303.



—they did; not only so, but they were convinced and they proclaimed to the world that “if we do not succeed in these conferences, there will be a disaster, there will be a world revolution”, and so on and so forth. You will remember some months back when there was a World Economic Conference<sup>3</sup>—one of these 133—that met in London, everybody proclaimed that “if this conference fails, the end of the present order is in sight and there will be an enormous catastrophe.” Well, this conference failed. Now, you see the last gasping efforts or the Disarmament Conference in Geneva<sup>4</sup>—that, too, is collapsing.

Well, I mention these to you to make you realise how extraordinarily knotty the problems are today in the world and how difficult it is for the world to solve them, because today I shall address you in a few moments in regard to our present position in India and I do wish you to feel that our present position in India is a part of the international situation. Our movement is a freedom movement. We desire the independence of India, but it is a part and parcel of the great world movement, the great revolutionary urge that is shaping the world today; and unless you understand and appreciate that, you will never be able to get the key to the Indian situation.

Then, again, to take a jump and to come back to your own province of Bengal—to come to certain parts of Bengal—we find the most amazing and the most extraordinary occurrences taking place here. Last evening, in this very hall, a meeting of protest—‘of emphatic protest!’, as they said—was held here against what was happening in Midnapur district. Well, I had the honour to be present there and I said a few words—a very few words to express the anger that was in my heart, because what happens in Midnapur, or Chittagong, what has taken place and is taking place there is not merely the humiliation of Midnapur or Chittagong or the particular area where it takes place, but it is a deliberate insult of the Indian people, it is a humiliation of the whole of India, and it is well that each one of us should realise that those orders, those humiliating restrictions, commands and behests that have been issued in Midnapur, apply to each one of us, however high or low he may be, in the whole of India. Well, some

3. The World Economic Conference opened in London on 12 June 1933. Roosevelt’s repudiation of the formula devised to ensure stable currencies in the world made the Conference ineffective.
4. The Disarmament Conference which began on 2 February 1932 in Geneva failed to reach any agreement. France refused to disarm unless she was assured of “security” and Germany demanded the right to rearm if nations like France were to retain their arms. The Conference adjourned on 11 June 1934.



of us, it is very natural, feel very angry about that and some of us should perhaps get angry with the individual officers who might have issued those orders. But the fact remains that it is not a question of individual officers here and there doing such things but of a certain enormous machine that moves on, crushing everything that comes in its way. Officers, whether they happen to be Viceroys or Governors or happen to be red-coated *chaprasis*, they have little say in the matter in spite of the pomp that may accompany them wherever they may go. What we are up against is not an officer however high he may be, but we are up against a certain system, against a machine which crushes the Indian people today, which exploits them and tries to humble and humiliate them. And today because the Indian people have risen and have put up a very gallant and a very effective fight for freedom, shaken up that machine and almost made it totter, that machine reacts as all such machines have reacted in the past and present. It reacts even forgetting the ordinary canons of war, because when one's life is threatened one is apt to be terribly nervous, terribly forgetful of all ordinary precepts of humanity. When the life of British imperialism was threatened by our freedom movement, it has reacted in the peculiar way in which all such monsters react. We see that in Midnapur, Chittagong and Dacca. You know that one of the tremendous excuses for all that is happening in these areas—one of the reasons which the government puts forward—is that it has to meet the terrorist menace in Bengal.

You know my views about such individual acts of terrorism, because I spoke to you about them on the last occasion and I tried to show to you how it is a completely ineffective, wrong and harmful move for us in our present stage of growth. I did not tell you that merely as a pious platitude. What I tried to tell you, whatever I propose to tell you now is not going to be, in spite of what my friend has asked me to say, an appeal to your emotions or an attempt to inspire you, because that is a thing I am not capable of doing, but I certainly prefer to appeal to your minds instead of to your emotions for the time being. It is good to have emotions, to use them and to be impelled by fine emotions—I do not wish to decry them. It is good to have emotions, but still behind emotions there should be minds functioning. Therefore I want to appeal to your minds and as I said on the last occasion when I addressed you here I told you in regard to these individual sporadic acts of terrorism that they were weak, ineffective, futile, harmful and completely out of date. Personally speaking, I take pride in the fact that I claim myself to be a revolutionary and I want revolutionaries in this country. I think every



person who has any spirit in him, who feels that he must take a part in upsetting the evil order in this country, he must be a revolutionary or nothing else. What is the meaning of the word 'revolutionary'? You must try to understand that. Merely an individual act does not make that act—whatever that act may be—a revolutionary act. The only test of a revolutionary action is this—that it helps in promoting a revolutionary atmosphere, that it creates a spirit, a militant spirit in the masses. That is the test of a revolutionary act, not any other test. And I tell you that if you judge it from this test, these individual acts are counter-revolutionary, they are not revolutionary. You think in terms of either mass action or individual action. If you understand at all—if you have studied at all the technique of revolutionary action, you will know that it is based today completely on mass action; and if you indulge in mass action, fundamentally that mass action must be peaceful action. It cannot be otherwise, it may be otherwise but today the technique of revolutionary action is fundamentally peaceful action, whether it is a general strike or a labour strike or other forms of civil disobedience etc., etc. For the moment I am not discussing the question of *himsa* or *ahimsa* from a political or moral standpoint. I wish you to consider that today the only effective means of action in order to impress the will of the people on any group or any power that oppresses them is mass action, and there is no other method. And if you want to approach the masses, to organise the masses, you cannot do so by individual acts of terrorism. That shows an extraordinary misconception of the situation. In spite of claiming to be a revolutionary act, it really becomes a counter-revolutionary act, because that action brings in its train consequences which produce an atmosphere contrary to what you ought to produce; and you see today that though individuals may become militant, the masses do not.

I do not wish to repeat the arguments I told you two years ago. You must consider this problem not in a hurry, in a mood of sentiment but try to reason it out, because it is a problem of life and death for all of us in this country, as to what road we should adopt. And now what do we see? These occasional, sporadic acts of terrorism which still take place unfortunately in some parts of Bengal—this has been made an occasion by the British Government for trying to crush every kind of public—effective or ineffective—activity in Bengal. They have tried in those parts of the province not only to crush the activity of the people, but they have tried to humiliate, humble and insult the people of those places in every possible and conceivable manner, where every boy and girl above 12 years is a suspect, where



you may not ride a bicycle or where your houses are searched from morning till evening, where you are asked to come and salute the Union Jack forcibly, where you are asked to come with presents of *dalis* to the "respected" district magistrate when he arrives at the station, and you are informed in writing that disobedience will be construed into an act of disloyalty.

Is any of you here loyal to the British Government? I say if you are loyal then I have nothing to say. In the Congress we have nothing to do with loyalty. We are disloyal, not once but hundred times, and it is our business to preach disloyalty wherever we go. Today you and I have to choose loyalty or disloyalty. Loyalty is a fine word in the English language—but loyalty to whom? Are you going to be loyal to those people who humiliate your people, who degrade your country, or are you going to be loyal to your own country, to your own people? I am proud to be loyal to my own country and not to anyone who is going to insult my country and my people. I have no quarrel with any foreign country or any foreign flag, but if I am asked and forced to salute any flag and specially the Union Jack, I hope I shall have the strength to die a thousand deaths. That is happening in our country and there is no lack of men in this country who in spite of what is taking place in Midnapur and elsewhere go and consort with these men and shake hands which are dripping with blood. I do hope that most of us will realise that we shall have nothing to do with those people, whether they are Englishmen or Indians. It may be that the latter have become so frightened that they cannot give expression to their views. So the British Government has used all its strength—has made this terrorist movement an excuse for crushing the life of Bengal. Of course, it cannot crush all life in Bengal but it has tried to do so and is trying to do so. The way in which it is trying to crush the freedom of the press, the freedom of meeting and the usual activities that take place ordinarily in this province, is probably better known to you than to me. Today, you have as much freedom as the freedom not to use that freedom. You are free so long as you do not use any freedom. If you use it, there your freedom ends. That is the position not only in this province but in the whole of this country.

Well, that is the situation from a national point of view, if I may say so, facing us. But I want to delve a little further and consider the reality behind this, because after all there are bigger things behind this which make individuals and nations act in the manner they do. I told you just a short while ago what we are up against—not an



individual officer or a group of people but a machine which is crushing us and exploiting us. Why is that so and how can we get rid of it—that, after all, is the problem before you. If you go still further you will find that today even your national movement has at the back of it the economic discontent of the people. You and I, who presume to be intellectuals to some extent, perhaps think that freedom is an idealist conception which comes out of our heads. We desire freedom because it is good. No doubt that is true, but fundamentally nations desire freedom because of economic causes. Fundamentally the Indian masses move and have moved because of the economic discontents they are troubled with, and therefore, if you study these causes you will come to the conclusion that today the dominant and the predominant feature of the situation in India as well as the world is the economic factor.

It is the economic factor that has troubled the European countries and is bringing them near disaster; and it is the economic factor which is at the back of your movement. Unless you understand that, you will not be able to understand the present situation, and because it is the economic factor, no solution will be a proper solution till we find a solution of the economic problems of this country and the world.

I have tried, during the last three or four months that I have been out of prison, to lay some stress on these economic considerations. Perhaps some of you may have come across those articles and writings of mine and most of you may know that the way I look upon these problems is the socialist way. I think there is no other solution and the socialist solution is bound to come sooner or later; and so long as that solution does not come, you will find no political solution of these problems either in India or in the larger world outside.

Now if you think along these lines, if you think at all, you will gradually come to those views because there is no escape from those views. You will have to fashion your own activity accordingly and you cannot act merely in the air, purely on political, national lines. Your nationalism must solve the economic problems, your nationalism must take on an economic tinge, it must, in other words, become socialist. I do not refer to national socialism which is an emotional word for fascism, because personally I have the extremest dislike for fascism. I think it is a most undesirable thing and I should like to combat it if it came to India. But when I say your nationalism should become economic, I mean that nationalism must remain with us because we cannot escape from the nationalist outlook, so long as



there is foreign domination in this country. But that is not enough. You have to think along economic lines and solve economic issues, and I hope you will solve them. So you will come to the conclusion that I have come to, namely, that the only solution lies in the way of socialism and in the ending of the present extraordinary feudal and other relics in this country. I do not think any real progress is possible as long as you are saddled with these feudal relics; and, having come to that conclusion, you will draw up a programme of activity which will help you in ending them.

Now any effective movement, I told you, must be a mass movement. You people living in the city of Calcutta or studying here, for the time you are here, you have largely to deal with city problems and are keeping yourselves aloof from the village folk. You have to understand that India is after all an agricultural and village country. So any big mass movement must fundamentally be a peasant movement in this country. Of course, industrial workers must also play a big part in it, as also the lower middle class, but a really big mass movement must essentially depend on the agriculturists and peasants. And, therefore, the problem before us becomes one of working in those village areas, taking not only the message of freedom but making them understand how their economic ills can find solution, as also organising them and helping them. We are not organising them to help us, though we are too often tempted to talk in such terms, but rather going and helping them in their freedom movement. Is it going to be their freedom movement in which you could help them or is it going to be your freedom movement in which they could help you? Therefore, you have to go to them and help them to realise their own strength and to organise themselves and specially to appreciate their economic troubles and try to get rid of them.

You will tell me that under the present conditions it is not at all possible. It is not easy at any rate to function in this way, because our benign government comes in the way wherever we go. If we go to the villages it comes in the way, if we function at all it comes in the way. That is perfectly true, but what is the conclusion you draw from this? Some of our friends draw the conclusion that we should give up our aggressive tactics and resort to certain non-aggressive defensive tactics so as to avoid conflict with the government and thereby gradually develop our organisation and then, perhaps later on, think of aggressive tactics. That is the suggestion put forward by some of our friends. But those friends seem, to me, to ignore certain fundamental aspects of the question. Every national movement, every social and economic movement, when it begins and is weak, is tolerated



by the ruling power or the ruling group. As it grows an attempt is made to suppress it, but still it grows, because behind it there are certain economic causes which push it on. But the time comes when it grows so strong as to actually endanger the existing social order. When that nationalist or socialist movement becomes so strong as to endanger and threaten the existence of the ruling power, then that ruling power tries to crush it with all its might. Then there is no room left for any forbearance and courtesy between the two groups. Then they come to close grips with each other and then the historical stage is reached when that nationalist or socialist movement ceases to be constitutional or legal. It is not a matter merely of the government declaring a certain organisation illegal but rather a historical development of a certain movement when it automatically becomes unconstitutional and illegal; and that, mind you, is the sign of its strength. When it becomes strong enough to threaten the existing order then it cannot alter that and function as a constitutional and legal movement.

The Congress has been declared illegal, thousands of Congress bodies and allied organisations have been declared illegal. But that is only an outward indication of that historical stage that we have reached. We reached that stage in 1930 and ever since then we have been hovering about the verge of it. When I say 'we' I mean principally the Congress of course, but I also refer to something bigger than the Congress i.e., the whole national movement of India. Now, having reached that stage, there is no going back from it. I say if tomorrow the All India Congress Committee passes a resolution "let us withdraw the civil disobedience movement", it would have some effect of course. It may stop the movement as it is being carried on today—it may also perhaps result in the ban of illegality being removed from the Congress. That is a possibility, though I doubt it. But even so we cannot go back from that historical stage that we have reached, because the nation has reached it, not the All India Congress Committee even if it has certainly helped to carry us to that point. And the result will be that, although a certain organisation, by cooperating, by compromising, by showing weakness, or whatever the reason may be, may become temporarily legal, the movement itself will always hover on the verge of illegality. That is to say, that any person doing any effective work, whether it is really effective work among peasants and workers, even effective social work, if it goes far enough, it is immediately stopped by the government because government cannot tolerate any effective work after that historical stage in the nation is reached.



Today, I see a great deal of Harijan work is being done in various parts of the country. Speaking of my own province wherever there is Harijan work,—I am not personally in Harijan work—but wherever that work is being done with any real strength behind it, it has come in conflict with government immediately. Harijan workers sent to villages have been arrested in some parts of the U.P. Although their object is purely Harijan work, yet the government is afraid of allowing them to go to rural areas.

So, the point I wish you to appreciate is this—we have arrived at a stage when fundamentally our strength remains on the edge of illegality and unconstitutionality, and there can be no going back from it. Of course, I do not mean that many of our activities are not legal and constitutional. The point is that any effective activity we indulge in, is immediately made illegal and unconstitutional by the government. It is easy enough to make it so—a little interpretation will make it. And as a matter of fact the present ordinances, ordinance laws and various other laws in force in this country are so extraordinarily comprehensive that any single activity can be construed as being against the law, and every individual, whoever he may be, if nothing else, can be considered a *badmash* and under preventive sections can be sent to jail. That is a frequent occurrence. They are sending a large number of workers to jail under sections which are meant for bad characters and these friends of ours are never mentioned in newspapers as civil disobedience prisoners. There are so many thousands in various provinces because those gentlemen go in as bad characters, who are not counted as such, of course the badness of their character being the undesirability of their politics in the eyes of government. So we have arrived at that stage and having arrived at that stage, in our national movement the only choice that is left to us is either to go ahead or to withdraw—either to do nothing, to become ineffective or act effectively and thus come into conflict with the government. There is no other third way. People delude themselves into suggesting various ways.

Now, the choice before us is either effective action which brings us into conflict with government or no action at all. Some people tell us “let us fight on all fronts”, which, if analysed, means withdrawal from fighting on any front. Sometimes you may have heard a very peculiar argument that we have been struggling for freedom in this country in a particular way for the last fourteen or fifteen years and our condition is worse than it was. We have got ordinance laws, censorship and the rest of it—our condition is far worse than it was fifteen years ago. This is an argument which specially our



moderate friends have advanced. They say that "we seem to be going from bad to worse by our methods and tactics." That is a fundamentally wrong view of the situation. If you fight for the citadel of power, if you fight for the real thing and not merely for some shadow of power, then there can be no getting of power in bits. If, suppose, you are marching on to a citadel or fortress which is occupied by another army, well, do you conceive of bits of the citadel or fortress falling in your hands and for the rest living in amity and friendship with the enemy army? That does not happen. As you approach the fortress, instead of your condition becoming better your condition will become worse and worse. So, I want first to say a word or two as to the extreme falsity of this argument. The more your strength increases, the more you approach the citadel of power, the more fierce is the fighting going to be. It does not lessen as you approach, it becomes worse and when you are actually at the citadel near the walls of the fortress, fighting will be the fiercest and your condition will be the worst conceivable. Indeed, the day before you seize power and get into the citadel, that evening your condition will be the worst of all. To think in terms of getting two annas or four annas of the possession of the fortress is really to misunderstand history and human nature completely. It is possible, I can conceive of a compromise coming between one group which desires to go forward and the group in the fortress, the compromise being that the group in the fortress allows the other group the possession of the area outside. That is a possibility, you may consider that as getting two annas power. But if it is a question of your taking possession of the citadel, there is not two annas or four annas—either one will prevail or the other. Two powers cannot exist in the same country and at the same time. Of course, you may have dual authority during the transition period when power is shifting from one party to the other.

People who imagine that they can gradually get the freedom of India, either they delude themselves or are thoroughly ignorant of history, because such a thing never happens and will never happen in India. How and when we shall achieve power I cannot say—I am not a prophet—but I cannot conceive of power coming to you bit by bit. As far as I can see, Indian nationalism and British imperialism are at close grips with each other. British imperialism may succeed in suppressing Indian nationalism, but remember this also: that while Indian nationalism may be suppressed many a time by British imperialism Indian nationalism will grow again, but British imperialism will be suppressed once for all by Indian nationalism and it cannot grow up after that, because it is fundamentally and historically a



receding phenomenon. Indian nationalism is bound to come up again and again because the basis of it is the national urge of India. But at the same time there is the economic discontent of India and no amount of repression and no amount of forcible salutation of the Union Jack fills the hungry stomach. No amount of orders and ordinances will make hungry people contented. You can satisfy a hungry man for a short while, but his hunger will drive him into action and so today in India, even if leaders and organisations weaken, compromise and betray, this economic urge remains and will continue to push the masses on; that pushing process is bound to continue till a solution is found for economic troubles and that solution will not be a sufficient solution if it is merely a political solution.

Now, therefore, if you consider the situation in the world which is on the verge of revolution, you will find there has never been a period in the history of the world more full of revolutions and changes than this 20th century of ours. If anybody dislikes changes and revolution all that can be said is this that he has chosen a very wrong moment to be born, because he cannot escape from it. You see all over Europe and America, in fact everywhere that the most extraordinary changes have taken place and still greater changes are hovering in the future. You hear talk of war, international war, terrible war which may come off sooner or later and which seems bound to come off. I confess to you that sometimes I welcome the idea of war, and yet at the same time the idea frightens me sufficiently because the next war is going to be such a terrible affair and what will survive from the war, it is very difficult to say. We have merely to take an objective view of the situation and we find today all over the world and in India these revolutionary conditions existing. They may continue for years and no terrible crisis may come off, but, as far as one can see objectively, the whole trend of affairs is drifting towards a tremendous catastrophe.

What then are you going to do in India, how are we to fashion our struggle so as to achieve freedom the soonest? If conditions are revolutionary, in some measure they should help us because we want revolutionary changes in this country. If Indian conditions had been more or less stable, of course we would have to work for a long-distance change but today we cannot afford to do that. Therefore we have to carry on our campaign, our struggle for freedom aggressively—at whatever level it may be it does not matter. We are not ashamed to confess our weakness. You and I ought to know both our strength and our weakness. We should neither exaggerate our strength nor minimise our weakness. It is true that today the British Government has to a



large extent suppressed our movement, that is to say, suppressed the outward manifestations of our movement—it is perfectly true. But it is also true that the British Government with all its might and main has not been able to suppress it quickly. And it is equally obvious to the British Government as well as to the Indian people that it is a physical impossibility for the British Government to suppress this movement completely. Every mass movement goes up and down. You cannot keep up a mass movement at a certain pitch for ever, it cannot be done. But that does not mean that the movement has been suppressed or crushed. I read the other day in an Anglo-Indian newspaper of Bombay, *The Times of India*—it was a review of the situation—and it said that “we have crushed the Congress, it does not function.” Then there is an ‘if’ and it was a very big ‘if’—‘if Congress was allowed to function for a fortnight it would become stronger than ever all over the country!’ An extraordinary remark of *The Times of India*—to say that a thing which has been crushed will suddenly become a powerful organisation all over India after a fortnight’s work! Now our movement which has come down to a low level today and which is not a mass movement yet has all the potential strength in it and at any moment it will grow up and it will grow up not because of you and me but because of the inherent force at work today. You and I can push it on as far as possible by effective work. Aggressive work, you will remember, will inevitably bring us to conflict with government. If conflict comes I will welcome it. It is not merely a question of going to jail mechanically. If in the course of our work we come into conflict with government, well and good, if not, we carry on our work with more aggressiveness and more effectiveness.

Now, I should like to say a few words in connection with another matter. Many of our friends have asked me in other parts of the country as well as here—“We want to do no aggressive political work but we want to do other social work, i.e., village work, organisation work etc. What are we to do?” The other day—only a few days ago—in the course of a press interview I said something for which I am rather sorry because it was a great slur on a respected class or group. I said that while referring to village work. Some news agency—the Associated Press I think—had sent a message saying that Jawaharlal proposes to devote himself in future to quiet village work. I am not against village work but the impression gathered from reading that passage seemed to be that I was going to retire behind the *purdah* and not to do any aggressive political work. So in the course of a press interview I said “I have no intention of retiring behind the *purdah*, and doing this kind of constructive work, as this could very well be done by old ladies, and



I do not believe in the safety first principle".<sup>5</sup> I apologise in all humility to old ladies because it is really unfair to them. We have seen some wonderful old ladies in this country and still we have them and they still play a very important part in our movement. Also, I really do not wish to run down village work. There you come into contact with villagers and workers. It is far better than doing nothing and sitting idle. I do think that even village work, if it is effective, brings us into conflict with government and you must be prepared for that. That is your look-out.

Two or three words more and I shall finish. Recently, I made some remarks about communalism in India and they gave rise to a controversy.<sup>6</sup> I am not averse to controversy. I took a fair and aggressive part in that controversy and I feel—I hope I am not taking undue pride in this fact—I emerged triumphant from that controversy. The fact remains that it is a matter for you to consider, because this communal question, I say and I do repeat before you, is a bogus question. It is not a communal question. It is purely a reactionary question. It is a question raised by political reactionaries to cloud the other real and effective political issues in the country. I tell you there are of course—I do not challenge them—many good people, many honest people, even people who have taken a brave part in the fight for freedom, in communal movements and organisations. They have unfortunately been deluded—they have not really understood what the communal organisations stand for. But fundamentally the communal organisations in India, whether they are Hindu or Moslem or any other, they stand for political reaction and their leaders stand for political reaction. If you analyse their statements and their repeated speeches and their policies and methods, you find each one of them trying his utmost to gain the favour of government. Inevitably they have to become more and more reactionary. It is about time that young men exposed these facts. It is not communalism. I dislike this political reaction, this bogus thing, going about under the mask of communalism.

Friends, I do not know whether what I have told you is connected or disjointed, because I came here in a very disjointed frame of mind, because a very hurried programme, one function after another, does not allow me to think about anything. I was worried, I am still worried but now it is a different kind of worry. Many things I might have told you—some perhaps I have said in a peculiar way, a disjointed way and I am not going to say more because my time is up. But I do

5. See *ante*, item, 37.

6. See *post*, subsection on communalism.



wish to say one thing, that when we talk about our sacrifices and sufferings for the cause and all that, we do not really do adequate justice to the tremendous sufferings that our people have undergone. After all, our suffering is a mere flea-bite. If we compare it with what other nations have gone through—at any rate it is not easy to compare it with many nations—you will find that they had to go through something tremendously more and we must not flinch because of this little measure of repression or oppression or humiliation that we may have to put up with. If we desire freedom we shall have to pay in full measure the price for freedom. I honestly tell you that it rather annoys me when people talk so much of my sacrifice. What have I sacrificed? I have sacrificed nothing. I lead the life of a man now and I feel happy about it. Sometimes I may misbehave, I may lose my temper, but I tell you I have peace of mind which I did not have before. I think it is absurd, it is a calumny to go about saying that “I have sacrificed this or that”. I have sacrificed nothing that I consider worthwhile, and it is a tremendous thing, I tell you, because after all the real joy in life comes from the knowledge that you are serving in a mighty cause—a cause that you know to be a great cause and if you devote yourselves to it you get something which is worth having. Specially if the cause has some relation to the masses, this huge conglomeration of humanity. You forget the little worries of life, the hundred and one little things that trouble you—the illnesses and sickness. So many of us are complaining of these troubles and thinking that the world is conspiring against them. I want you young men and women to look upon this really as something which will bring joy to you and make you feel that you are really acting as men and women should act and that it is no sacrifice.

Well, I shall now take leave of you and say farewell for a time at least. Perhaps that time may be a long time. I have come back after two and a quarter years and I do not know how many years it may be before I come back again. But whether it is long or short it does not matter, because you can take it from me that we shall meet again and again. We shall meet perhaps here, perhaps, and I hope so, many of you and I will meet in the battle-field of action in the struggle of ours and certainly I hope that we shall all meet one day to celebrate the freedom of India.



## 41. On Independence<sup>1</sup>

What we are having today is not a proposal but a vow. Despite great hardships our flag is still flying. The government has failed to crush the movement.

Do not be under any delusion that by getting more seats in the councils or by any Indian becoming a great officer the situation will improve.

An Indian has been appointed as Governor in U.P.,<sup>2</sup> but there is no relaxation in repression nor has the province benefited in any way due to his appointment. They are all alike, parts of a big machine, and mere white or black parts do not make any difference in the action of the machine.

The question before you is how to fill your starving bellies. Several people who are patted by the government have issued notices to the effect that Congress is responsible for the fall in prices. If the Congress had such power it could have wiped out British rule in India.

It must be stressed that the administration under the White Paper will be much more costly than at present, a fact which has been admitted even by Sir Malcolm Hailey. I would warn you not to be deceived by the talk of reforms.

The question is not one of two or three annas but a basic one. It is a question of full independence.

Take the example of two warring armies. One of the two is bound to remain in the fort while the other might perhaps get a place in the stable. Those who talk of getting two or three annas want to live in the stables, but I think all Indians are not animals; there are also men among them. The last stages of the fight are bound to be grave.

You all know what is happening in Bengal, particularly in Midnapur and Chittagong.

The question of freedom is one of life and death. It is a question of hunger which cannot be solved by any leader entering into a compromise with the government; nor can repression satisfy the hunger of the people.

1. Speech at Allahabad on Independence Day, 26 January 1934. From *The Tribune*, 29 January 1934.
2. The Nawab of Chhatari.

## SOCIALISM AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

### 42. To T. Viswanatham<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow

October 2, 1933

My dear Viswanatham,

It is good to hear from you again. I do not personally think that the political condition of our country at present is at all unsatisfactory. There are of course numerous difficulties in our way and there is a lull in our activities. But all this is natural and nothing to be surprised or annoyed at. There is a certain amount of confusion in the minds of people. This is due not so much to what any individual has done but to the fact that world conditions and objective facts are forcing the country to adopt a new way of thinking. To give up an old ideology to which we are accustomed is always a painful process.

The real difficulty in India as well as in the world today is that ideas as well as the social and political structure lag far behind existing conditions; hence the conflict and confusion. Till that lag is made good this conflict will continue. Human nature being what it is there is little chance of the lag being made good by means of peaceful efforts and gradual change through the cooperation of various groups. Because this does not happen, revolution takes place.

The world conditions today are forcing big changes whether we are mentally ready for them or not. Our social system may be thousands of years old but that will not save it nor will it delay a change when it comes. It will only result in the change being sudden and far-reaching. Therefore we cannot afford today to have a gradual long-distance programme. Tact of course is always good but if tact means an attempt to confuse issues it is bad. The greatest need of the day is clear thinking even at the cost of tact.

You refer to the need of propaganda and invite me to go to Andhra. I would love to visit Andhra but I am a bit surprised at your making

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



such a suggestion. We are in the midst of a struggle and all such peace time activity is barred. Long before the date you mention I hope to be back in prison.

With all good wishes,

Yours fraternally,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### 43. To Bhagavan Das<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow  
October 2, 1933

My dear Babu Bhagavan Dasji,

Thank you for your letter. I have also read the letter published in *The Leader* of the 25th to which you refer.<sup>2</sup> It is my intention to write something on the subjects you mention or at any rate on some of them. But I have not yet adapted myself to life outside jail and I find that numerous little things and worries come in the way of my writing seriously. However, I shall try.

My one idea is that the present confusion in thought which we see all around us in India is due to the fact that our old ideology does not fit in with existing facts. There is a tremendous lag between the two and this causes confusion and conflict. We live between two ages. We think in terms of the old and try to act in terms of the new. This is natural enough and to some extent we see it all over the world today.

There is of course no such thing as absolute independence for a nation or an individual. The modern world especially is based on cooperation and interdependence. Indeed many of the world's troubles are due to non-recognition of this fact and yet personally I have laid stress on the term "Independence" for India because it brings out rather aggressively one important aspect of our national problem—complete freedom from British control. Every other word that we may use is misinterpreted, and leads to loose thinking and vague ideology and compromise. It forces people to face the real national issue. You may remember that some time back the Oxford Union passed a resolution which created something of a sensation. This resolution said, so far as I remember,

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. In this letter, signed by "Enquirer", a clear statement of economic policy had been demanded from the Congress.

that under no circumstance would they fight for their King and country. On the face of it this resolution was extravagant and could hardly represent the true feelings of those who voted for it. And yet it was a truer one than any vague slipshod appeal to peace and condemnation of war which almost anybody could have supported. It is for this reason that I adhere to the word "Independence". It is also for this reason that I think it is desirable to deal with economic problems rather brutally and not tone them down in order to soothe some people's susceptibilities. Facts themselves are brutal in this world and soft words do not alter them; they only help to delude ourselves and others. At the same time of course it is always desirable to use the language of peace wherever this does not produce confusion and a false impression.

My mother's condition is very unsatisfactory but I hope to take her to Allahabad day after tomorrow.

Yours very sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

#### 44. To Bagh Singh<sup>1</sup>

Lucknow

October 2, 1933

Dear Friend,<sup>2</sup>

I have your letter. Not knowing the details of your scheme of work I can say little about it. But I feel sure that the idea of starting a bank for the development of agriculture and industry involves all manner of difficulties at present. If you will study the situation in Europe and America you will find that the tremendous trade depression which is breaking down the capitalist system in the West has been caused by certain fundamental causes which go to the root of the matter. There is no lack of banks in Western countries but large numbers of them have failed during the last four years. The whole system has broken down and it cannot be propped up. We are living through a period of intense social change.

Your reference to the crore of rupees that the Congress collected in 1921 shows some ignorance of the matter. The money was not

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. A retired headmaster of Khalsa High School, Gujranwala.



collected for khadi although khadi had some part of it. This khadi part of the fund is still almost intact and finances the widespread operations of the All India Spinners' Association. Part of the rest of the money went in carrying on national universities and schools. The greatest part, however, was spread out all over India and used by thousands of Congress committees for political work. Far from being lost this money yielded great results. I doubt if such a comparatively small sum has ever gone so far in any country.

You must keep in mind the objective conditions of this country and of the world at present and try to discover the great forces that are shaping world events before you can draw up an effective scheme of work.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

#### 45. To Bhagavan Das<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

October 17, 1933

My Dear Babu Bhagavan Dasji,

Many thanks for your enlightening letter which I have read with great interest.<sup>2</sup> I am glad you liked my recent article. You will forgive me if I do not write at length just at present. The subjects you touch upon—communism, fascism, economic conditions, social conditions, sex, functional organisations of the society etc.—require elaborate treatment.

Briefly I will say that though there may be outward similarity between the communist state and the fascist state there are fundamental differences. Both are dictatorships but in the former society as a whole profits by it and no special class is a favoured one except in a very minor degree. In the fascist state the dictatorship stands for certain possessing classes who profit by it. Russia is deliberately and scientifically going towards a definite and well thought-out goal. It

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. In his letter of 13 October 1933, Bhagavan Das had written that there was "much in common" between fascism and communism. He also stated that he had read that Stalin received a monthly salary of 700 roubles or 1100 rupees.

is perfectly true that at the present moment many things exist that conflict with pure socialism but the whole tendency is towards a socialistic state. Fascism has no philosophy and no scientific outlook and no clear goal. Under fascism, as in Germany, the working class and liberal elements generally have been crushed out.

I think the figure you give about salaries in Russia are not quite correct. Stalin probably gets the same salary as any other communist in any position and that does not usually exceed 300 or 400 roubles per



not know very much about it. I have personally every sympathy with any newspaper which publishes any rationalist view of life. I have found, however, that rationalism covers many kinds of dogmas which are as bad as religious dogmas of old. I hope your paper will be truly rationalist in every respect.

I am afraid I have no time to contribute an article as suggested by you.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

#### 47. On Fascism and Democracy<sup>1</sup>

The democratic system of government everywhere in Europe and America is collapsing. The nearest approach to it is in France and in England, more so in the former than in the latter. Even in these countries, the old style of democratic form has ceased to exist. All this shows that the old system is collapsing rapidly. Fascism is itself proof of the strength of the working class movement in Europe. Wherever the challenge to the possessing classes has been the greatest, they have huddled themselves together in the form of fascism to meet it. In Germany, the only alternative today to Hitlerism, as Hitler himself says, is communism.

There is certainly the possibility of the rise of fascism in India. Indeed, signs of it are already visible. But fascism cannot solve in Europe or India the real economic problem. And therefore it must inevitably fail some time or other.

1. Interview to the press, Allahabad, 28 October 1933. From *The Hindu*, 28 October 1933.

48. To R.W. Fulay<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

October 28, 1933

My dear Fulay,<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for your letter.<sup>3</sup> While I welcome the idea of labour unity I do not at present see how it is to be brought about. I am not in sufficient touch with present-day labour politics to give a definite opinion but I know enough to feel that there are radical differences which it will not be easy to bridge over. If there is anything that I can do to strengthen the labour movement in India I shall gladly do it. But I do not wish to make confusion worse confounded by suddenly entering the labour arena. I also do not wish to attach myself to any group.

My own sympathies and my ideology fit in far more with the advanced groups than with the moderate labour groups. At the same time I do not like some of the activities of these advanced groups. Moderate trade unionism is to my mind hopelessly inadequate under the existing circumstances. I think that trade unions must have an aggressive programme and at the same time labour should definitely have a political programme. How exactly this is to be brought about under existing circumstances is by no means clear. I am afraid I have no respect for people who talk tall and do nothing and there seems to be a good number of this kind in the labour movement.

I hesitate therefore at this juncture to take the initiative in this matter but I shall watch with interest developments in the Indian labour world and at any moment that I feel that I can be of help in the matter I shall certainly offer my services.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Secretary, Nagpur Trade Union Congress; member, Legislative Council, Central Provinces.

3. He had asked Jawaharlal whether he could settle the differences between the trade union leaders.



49. Thirteen Years<sup>1</sup>

"There is a vacant throne in every country of Europe for someone to occupy." So said Mussolini, having taken possession of one such throne. Unhappily for some aspirants for the seat of honour and authority, there is no such vacancy in India. For thirteen years the throne has been occupied in India by a person, who despite himself, cannot get out of it. Mr. Jamnadas Mehta, however, objects to this monopoly and would fain end it. And so, finding other means of no avail, he has adopted the curious and unusual expedient of asking him who occupies the throne to vacate it and give other aspirants a chance of honour and glory. Evidently political India is not big enough to contain both Gandhiji and Mr. Jamnadas Mehta.

Mr. Jamnadas Mehta is a leader of the working class movement in India. Now that he has challenged the succession to the political *gaddi* in India, he will tell us, I hope, what he aims at, what his ideology is, and how he intends to reach his goal. He is dissatisfied with our methods and activities of the past thirteen years and is of opinion that they have failed. How would he have acted during this period and what does he imagine that he would have achieved? The labour movement almost everywhere stands for socialism and its ideology is Marxist. Is Mr. Mehta a believer in Marxism and what is called the materialist interpretation of history? If so what brand of Marxism does he favour—social democracy or Leninism—and how does he intend applying it to India? Is his socialism a kind of heaven which has little to do with this earthly world of ours, a hereafter, the thought of which consoles and intoxicates and makes us forget for a while the sorrows of the world, or is it something more earthly and of the present? Is it of the brand that finds favour with Messrs. Ramsay MacDonald and Thomas, or of the fiercer variety known as national socialism of which Mussolini and Hitler are the major prophets?

1. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. This note was presumably written some time after 28 October 1933 when Jamnadas Mehta, at the Maharashtra Political Conference, declared that the "first and foremost duty of the country...is to break the spell of Mahatma Gandhi".

50. To Abdur Rahim<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
October 30, 1933

My dear Abdur Rahim,  
I was glad to hear from you after a long while. I should like to discuss the questions you suggest in your letter.<sup>2</sup> But for the present I do not propose to go to Calcutta. It is just possible, however, that I may go there some weeks later, if I remain outside gaol till then. I have no fear of Bengal or any other part of India not being the place for me. I can feel at home anywhere and as for Bengal, it is after all the elder brother of all the provinces so far as political work is concerned and I have always had a soft corner in my heart for it.

I do not think that the Congress as constituted is likely to become a full-fledged socialist organisation. But I do think that it will become more and more socialistic and as it does so, little groups interested in present social conditions will gradually drop out. That will be all for the good. I do not see why I should walk out of the Congress leaving the field clear to the social reactionaries. Therefore, I think it is up to us to remain there and try to force the pace, thereby either converting others or making them depart. Separate organisations may be desirable. For instance industrial labour must have a separate organisation and as far as possible the peasantry should also have a separate organisation but I do not think it is desirable to have purely political organisations, counter or parallel to the Congress. There is a great talk of the socialist party or the like but I am convinced that much of this talk is merely meant to cover ineffective action and also as a means of self-aggrandisement.

More when we meet.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Abdur Rahim had asked how the Congress, composed of different interests and groups, could propagate socialism and whether a parallel organisation would not invite an early clash.



## 51. Labour and the Congress<sup>1</sup>

During the great social and economic crisis that the world is passing through today, labour has a very special duty before it. For, inevitably, the burden of ideological leadership must remain with labour. In India, the national struggle covers and hides social differences. That is natural. But world events themselves are today forcing the pace and making even national movements more and more economic and social movements. All over the world there is a great struggle between the forces of labour and the forces of entrenched vested interests. The stakes are high and therefore we cannot afford either in our national struggle or in our social struggle to compromise with petty changes. If we are to profit by the world situation, we must make up our minds to struggle for a complete and fundamental change of regime. Nothing else should satisfy us, nothing else can solve our problems.

India is today in a somewhat confused state of mind. She finds that her old nationalist ideology does not fit in with the existing circumstances in the world. So she struggles to adopt a new way of thinking and this attempt to change over from the old to the new is a painful and confusing one. But the attempt must be proceeded with, for only thus, by adopting a progressive ideology of social revolution, can India take an effective part in the freedom struggle as well as in the world struggle.

In such a social struggle labour has always occupied the foremost place. Indian labour therefore must wake up out of its lethargy, close up its ranks, and face the situation bravely and with confidence. It must give up its timid attitude and its demands for petty reforms and seek to play a part in the wider issues which confront it and the world. Such opportunities come rarely. Our national struggle and our social and economic struggle must join hands for the emancipation of the people of India.

Labour represents the productive working class, that is to say, the class which economically and historically is the most important class of the future. It is therefore possible for labour to have a much

1. Message sent to the *Indian Labour Journal* on its eleventh anniversary in November 1933. Reprinted in *Recent Essays and Writings*, (Allahabad, 1934), pp. 131-134.



clearer ideology than for the Congress. Labour in theory is the most revolutionary group in a country because it represents the forces of the future. But in India today, as in every country under alien domination, the national problem overshadows social problems and nationalism is more revolutionary than the social struggle. World events are, however, pushing economic issues more and more to the front and even national organisations are becoming infected by such issues.

I am quite clear that labour should organise itself in trade unions and the like quite separately. Otherwise it will get lost in mixed nationalist groups. At the same time labour must recognise that nationalism is the strongest force in the country today and it must cooperate with it fully. It should also of course try to influence it on the economic issues.

I am not in theory against a labour political party apart from the Congress, but I fear that any attempt to make such a party today will only result in the exploitation of labour by a number of individuals who will try to advance themselves at the cost of labour.

The National Congress is, as its name implies, a national organisation. Its purpose is national freedom for India. It includes many classes and groups which have really conflicting social interests, but the common national platform keeps them together for the moment. During the past years it has inclined towards a socialist programme, but it is far from being socialist.

I should personally like the Congress to go very much further and to adopt a full socialist programme. I recognise also that there are many groups in the Congress today which are ideologically very backward and desire to prevent the Congress from going ahead. Recognising all this, I have no doubt whatever, that the Congress has been far the most militant organisation in India during recent years. It seems to me perfectly ridiculous for people who do nothing effective themselves to accuse Congress of lack of militancy. There is a grave danger of most of our so-called socialists confining their militancy to catch phrases and drawing-room parlours.

For Congressmen who are also interested in labour affairs, the course of action should be as follows: They should function separately in labour organisations, trade unions, etc., and help them to develop an ideology and programme of activity as militant as possible, even in advance of the Congress programme. In the National Congress they should try to push on an economic orientation in consonance with the labour programme. Inevitably the Congress programme, so far as ideology goes, will not be as advanced as the labour programme. But it is quite possible to have cooperation in militant activity.



**52. To Arjun Arora<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad

November 9, 1933

Dear Sir,<sup>2</sup>

I have received your letter and your manifesto. I am glad to learn that you and your colleagues are trying to think along socialist lines. In reading your manifesto, however, I do not see anything that is definitely socialistic. The bills that you propose are given in this but most of them are what might be termed liberal. I must however make one exception and that is the "Factory and Railway Soviet Establishment Bill".

Socialism as understood in this country usually means a vague idealism demanding justice for the underdog but modern socialism is something far more than this. It is called scientific socialism. It interprets history, economics, politics and indeed all branches of life in terms of certain fundamental laws. I would suggest to you to study this scientific socialism and to develop its ideology among your fellow students.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (b. 1912); general secretary, Textile Labour Association; editor, *Mazdoor Samachar* since 1951; member, Rajya Sabha, 1960-72.

**53. To Bulaki Rama<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad

November 24, 1933

My dear Bulaki Ramaji,

Please forgive me for the delay in answering your letter.<sup>2</sup> I appreciate what you have said about choosing a narrow issue. To some extent that has to be done and is indeed being done in local areas.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. In his letter of 6 October 1933, he suggested that the Congress agitate on narrow issues such as taxation of agricultural surplus.



But present-day conditions are such that broader issues have to be faced. I have written considerably on these latter issues in the press and I do not wish to repeat what I have said there. I would gladly associate myself with any demand for minimum agricultural income being assured to the peasantry. I think this is a perfectly sound position to take up. The first charge on the land must be the peasant's but I am equally sure this cannot be brought about either under the present political system or the present economic system. We are, however, laying stress on this aspect in our work in the villages here.

Your cooperation and help are always welcome. But conditions are so abnormal today that any of us may go back to gaol at any moment and I do not want to trouble you to change your place of residence under this condition.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

#### 54. Civics and Politics<sup>1</sup>

Politics today are in a sorry mess all over the world and distraught politicians seek in vain for a remedy. Their old methods have failed completely and events have marched ahead leaving the old guard of politicians far behind. With the passing of politics from the centre of the world's stage, economics has appeared from behind the scenes and has dominated men and events. The old style of politician feels helpless before this transformation, but in the West, at any rate, he has been forced to bow down before the new gods and pay them homage. Not so in India where many of us still cling to outworn theories and discredited methods.

The dominance of economics has brought new ideas and new theories in its train and the problems of the world are viewed in a new perspective. Out of this welter of ideas and theories has grown the scientific interpretation of history and politics and economics that is known as scientific socialism or Marxism or communism. Many

1. First published in *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, 25 November 1933. Reprinted in *Recent Essays and Writings*, (Allahabad, 1934), pp. 140-141.



learned books have been written on this subject and passions have been roused and bitter conflicts have taken place.

There is one aspect of communism however which is easy to understand for the man in the street. Communism is in a way the municipalization of the country or the world. Of course this is a wholly insufficient definition. None the less it does give us a glimpse of what underlies communism. The true civic ideal aims at common possession and common enjoyment of municipal amenities, and these amenities go on increasing till they comprise almost everything that a citizen requires. Roads, bridges, lighting, water supply, sanitation, hospitals and medical relief, libraries, education, parks and recreation grounds, games, proper housing, museums, art galleries, theatres, music—these are some of the activities that a modern up to date municipality should be interested in, and some of the amenities which it should provide free of cost to all its citizens. Communism means the extension and the application of this civic ideal to the larger group of the nation and ultimately to the world. And so the civic ideal becomes the national and the international ideal, and, with the passing of pure politics, civics becomes merged in the communist ideal of a scientific ordering of the world's affairs and a proper planning and control, on behalf of and for the benefit of the masses, of production and distribution and the many other activities of the modern world.

## 55. The Civic Ideal<sup>1</sup>

In the old days the state was looked upon almost as the private possession of the sovereign. His chief business was to tax his subjects and to protect them from external invasion and internal disorder from robbers and the like. Having given a certain measure of security to his people, his job was done. If he did this and did not impose too crushing a burden of taxation, he was looked upon as a good sovereign. Such states have been called 'police states' as the principal duties of the government were in the nature of police duties. Our Indian states today are more or less of this type, with this essential difference that

1. 1 December 1933. *The Citizen*, December 1933. Reprinted in *Recent Essays and Writings*, (Allahabad, 1934), pp. 142-144.



they have not to protect themselves from external invasion. The British Government in India during the nineteenth century was also largely a police government. It did very little for the educational, cultural, industrial, medical and sanitary development of the state. Gradually, however, it was forced by circumstances to interest itself in some of the multifarious activities of the modern state, though its interest did not go far and it produced very little in the shape of actual results.

It was in the cities that the idea of providing something more than protection for the citizens first developed. The close association of a large number of human beings in cities resulted in the growth of cooperative activities and of culture. With the civic ideal began to emerge the idea, that amenities for the common enjoyment of the citizens should be provided for. Roads and bridges which were privately owned and subject to tolls, became public property and free to all without payment. Sanitation, lighting, water supply, hospitals and medical relief, parks and recreation grounds, schools and colleges, libraries and museums, became the functions of the municipality. Today it is considered the function of a municipality not only to provide all these free of any charge to all its citizens, but also to provide art galleries, theatres, music and, most important of all, proper housing for everybody. But obviously the basic need is for food and to present art and culture to a man who has no food is to mock him. Hence it is the business of a modern municipality today to see to it that no one starves within its confines; to provide work for those who are workless, and, if no work is to be had, to provide food. That is the civic ideal today, although few municipalities approach it. In India, of course, we are still very far from even having a glimpse of the ideal.

This civic ideal gradually captured the state and with it the activities of the state grew in all directions. The police state transformed itself into the modern state, a complex, paternal organism with a large number of departments and spheres of activities, and innumerable contacts with the individual citizen. Not only did it give him security from external invasion and internal disorder, but it educated him, taught him industries, tried to raise his standard of living, gave him opportunities for the development of culture, provided him with insurance schemes to enable him to face any unforeseen contingency, gave him all manner of amenities, and made itself responsible for his work and food. The civic ideal was spreading. Today it has spread as far as it can under the existing social structure and it finds its further progress stopped so long as that structure remains what it is.

The true civic ideal is the socialist ideal, the communist ideal. It means the common enjoyment of the wealth that is produced in nature



and by human endeavour. That ideal can only be reached when the present social structure is changed and gives place to socialism.

## 56. To Onkar Nath Verma<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

December 2, 1933

Dear Comrade,<sup>2</sup>

I have your long letter.<sup>3</sup> It is a little difficult to reply in detail because that would involve writing a long essay. I might point out however that I have not attacked communists all over the world (except those of Russia). What I have stated is that communist tactics, that is to say, the tactics of the Comintern have not succeeded in other countries so far. As you must know that is the view of some prominent communists also, like Trotsky.

You are also wrong in thinking that I expect very much from the peasantry. But I do think that the next step will be influenced very greatly by the attitude of the peasantry. I should like the industrial workers to develop the most advanced ideology and to take the lead both of the peasantry and the freedom movement. But at the present moment in India the industrial workers have no such influence over the rest of the country. One has, therefore, either to wait till the workers become class conscious enough and take the leadership or one has to work up the rest of the country so that the two processes might combine and lead to big results.

It is absurd to call the Karachi or the Allahabad resolutions communistic or even socialistic. Nobody has described them as such. They were passed by a national organization and not by a proletarian organization. They merely indicate that our national movement is gradually turning towards the left. I think this is a desirable development and that this in itself will help the fuller development of an advanced ideology in groups. It will provide a background out of which that

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. A resident of Mirzapur district.

3. In his letter of 30 November 1933, he alleged that Jawaharlal had been "long neglecting" the proletariat and now found it "convenient" to build his hopes on the "peasantry alone". He also suggested that Jawaharlal had confused communism with "state socialism".

ideology can develop. Without that background the workers' struggle would have far greater difficulties. You must remember that the industrial workers are still only a very small part of the Indian population and their influence is far less than that of the workers of Russia was.

Personally I have never put any obstruction or condemned in any way any worker who stands for an advanced ideology. But taking objective conditions as they are I think we ought to take advantage of the national movement as far as it can go.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 57. To Beltie Shah Gilani<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
December 3, 1933

My dear Beltie Shah,

Thank you for your letter.<sup>2</sup> Your suggestions provoke thought but I must say that a reading of your letter leaves a confused impression of what you are driving at. There seems to me to be no reason why scientific socialism should ignore psychology and human nature. If it does so it will cease to be scientific. It is quite possible that the Russian experiment may fail, partly because Russia was a very backward country and partly it may be because of wrong methods. That would simply show that different methods should be employed.

I would not say that Marxism necessarily means swift and ruthless blows and certainly it does not imply chaos. I would put it this way: that it suggests a method of defence against the ruthlessness of present-day society. As vested interests never agree to give what they have got they prefer to create chaos and disruption rather than face the inevitable change.

The importance of Russia today is not that something has been done there which is worthy of imitation all along the line but because

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. In his letter of 28 November 1933, Beltie Shah held that the Russian experiment, where the "irrepressible human element was having the better of the economic determinist", was not a classical application of scientific socialism.



something worthwhile has been attempted there and this attempt in itself is full of lessons.

I suppose it is at your instance that Father Lyons<sup>3</sup> of Kurseong has been sending me large numbers of foreign periodicals. I welcome them but it is quite impossible for me to find the time to read all he sends me. It would be far better if he could send me just one or two periodicals.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. Of St. Mary's College, Kurseong.

## 58. To Amar Kishor Sinha<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
December 8, 1933

Dear Friend,<sup>2</sup>

I have your letter.<sup>3</sup> The condition of the peasantry is very bad all over India. Certainly we should try to help them by reviving hand-spinning as well as other village industries. But the real problem cannot be solved in this way. The only way to solve it is to change the whole land system and to write off the burden of debt. There is no other way out and therefore while we should try to give as much relief as possible we should really concentrate on organising the peasantry to fight for a radical change in the land system so that power may come into their hands. That means Swaraj.

If you want to enquire about hand-spinning please write to the Provincial Charkha Sangha, Muzzafarpur (Bihar).

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. A resident of Champaran.

3. In his letter of 3 December 1933, he urged the revival of cottage industries in the villages, especially hand-spinning and weaving.

**59. To Dinkar Mehta<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad

December 9, 1933

Dear Mr. Mehta,<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for your letter.<sup>3</sup> I quite agree with you that the future trend of the Congress must be socialistic. Not only the trend but the actions also. Apart from the ideology the spread of which is essential to right action, the action, if it is of a revolutionary or direct action nature, inevitably releases mass forces. In addition to this I should personally like Congress activities to concern themselves much more with the peasantry and the workers.

It is true Czarist Russia was an even more agricultural country than India today. But there is this difference: power was concentrated in the hands of an effete aristocratic group which had its headquarters in two centres—Petrograd and Moscow. In both these centres the industrial workers were strong and they could therefore influence tremendously and even upset the system of government. It is somewhat different here. Power is not so concentrated and we have to deal with a very powerful opponent who has his hold all over the country and whose sources of strength lie outside the country. Apart from this a perfectly extraordinary set of circumstances prevailed in Russia in 1917. No country can bank on a repetition of these circumstances.

My articles were written for those who do not know much about modern conditions or socialism. But it is perfectly true that a person who is wholly ignorant of these subjects will find some difficulty in understanding them. It is not possible to write something which will meet the level of the average intellectual as well as ignorant person. From what I have discovered of them, the articles were certainly not above the knowledge or intelligence of the average intellectual.

I am glad to learn that you have got over your illness.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1907); participated in Bardoli satyagraha, 1928, and civil disobedience, 1930; member, Congress Socialist Party, 1934, and Communist Party of India, 1935-64; at present secretary, Gujarat Committee of Communist Party (Marxist).
3. He had desired a clear statement from the Congress showing that its future trend was to be socialistic. He thought there was great need for socialist propaganda and not a mere development of ideology.



## 60. Speech at Delhi<sup>1</sup>

I am no stranger to Delhi and require no address. But I know that the address is not to me personally but to the cause I am deemed to represent. Freedom means the end of poverty and economic exploitation. The main problem before us today is to provide food and clothing to the millions of people who are being victimised by vested interests. Swaraj means the power to end unemployment, starvation and oppression, and not the winning of a few honours and jobs. Swaraj is not a beautiful word for which we are sacrificing our lives. The heaviest burden on the country today is the burden of foreign domination. Swaraj does not mean change of masters or replacement of white by brown bureaucracy. The majority of the people are being exploited by a few classes and the chief fight is against these classes.

Politics are never taught by books or merely by speeches, but facts and events teach politics to the millions. Only a selected few can read books, but the masses can learn from events. Repression, as we have experienced, frightens some people and makes others stronger and more determined. I am now trying to judge whether we have been suppressed or have become stronger. The pessimist amongst us occasionally comes out with arguments that with all the sacrifices we are yet far off from Swaraj. Oppressive measures, ban on freedom of the press and platform have taken us further off from Swaraj. But I am an optimist and disappointment is an unknown word in my dictionary of politics.

As for Sir Harry Haig's ban—on the meeting of the A.I.C.C.—I am immensely pleased to read the proceedings of the Assembly on the subject which still continues to exist in spite of our not taking any interest in it. The assertion of the government that it has wiped out the national movement and crushed the spirit of the people is only a proof of the fact that the government is trying to cover its moral defeat by mere words. Real freedom cannot be won until real power passes into the hands of the people to enable us to redress our grievances.

Apparently two classes of people have come into existence during recent years: those who are continuously going to jails and others who are making repeated pilgrimages to London as members of the R.T.C. and Joint Committee delegates, year after year, for the last four years. Tremendous volumes of evidence and records which can fill a number

1. 12 December 1933. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 18 December 1933.



of cellars have been published and songs of praise of Sir Samuel Hoare and his colleagues are being daily sung by those who have been to London. The government has really created this class of henchmen who are like clay in their hands. All the talk about federation has resolved into the fact that only a ceremonial show need be made of some sort of self-government with real power left in the hands of England, and all this apparatus is expected to add to the burden of taxation under which the poverty-stricken people of India are already groaning. Under no circumstance can this game satisfy the people of India.

The various countries of the world are almost on the verge of collapse and are on the brink of war. We may hear any day that a world war has broken out. The world is in a great whirlpool of economic revolution today. It is true that Britain has been a dominating power for a century. This is largely due to her early industrialization and to the economic exploitation of India. Before the Great World War, America and Germany were powerful industrial rivals and the rivalry of Germany precipitated the World War; and although England won the war, economic miseries have followed and brought all the countries of the world to the verge of collapse. During the last 15 years no less than 130 great conferences have taken place in order to bring about peace in the world, but the maze of difficulties into which the world powers have wandered into has led to the collapse of the economic system today.

So far, England was only an island and was protected by the navy but with the change in the methods of war and invention of aeroplanes and poisonous gases it is no longer left in isolation. A war in the air, the possibilities of which are not very remote, has ended England's previous safety. British imperialism is in the process of disintegration but how long that agony will last is not easy to say. But do not think England has become helpless, because a whole century or more of exploitation of India and the rest of the world has supplied her with enough resources to last a while longer.

As for the public debt of India, my personal view is that not a pie from the so-called national debt should be paid to England. England, which was a creditor country so long, has now become a debtor country and while trying to repudiate its debts, or at any rate struggling to get remission of debts, is insisting that the poorest people of the earth should not put forward a claim to cancel the so-called national debt. Wherever in the course of my speech I have used the word, England and English, I mean British imperialism, because even in England there are the poor and the labourers who are equally being victimised and exploited by imperialist policy.



Reverting to the question of convening the A.I.C.C., the government's decision to ban the A.I.C.C. meeting is rather amusing since those who want suspension of civil disobedience are the people anxious to convene a meeting of the A.I.C.C.; and still the Home Member has not the courage to allow such a meeting. As far as the question of holding the meeting is concerned, officially, I can say that the question does not arise because 30 members have not yet made the requisition in accordance with the constitution.

As for the future programme, the programme is there for those who want to work it. They have a definite programme of constructive work in lakhs of villages of India. Do your duty to these struggling peasants, serve them to your best. Those who cannot carry on this mission can carry on the campaign against untouchability but I am personally interested at present only in the political and economic struggle of India, and I want others not to sit idle in this connection. The political struggle must always have the first place in your hearts.

#### 61. Speech at Aligarh Muslim University<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Vice-Chancellor and young men of the University, You, Sir! have set up an example by addressing the House in English, and perforce I have to follow that example. I wanted to meet you because I have heard from my childhood of what Aligarh has done and of the large place its products occupy in our national life.

Friends! I was going to tell you some of the ideas that have moved me in the past and move me still. I have been a dreamer of dreams. I am called a dreamer. I wish you were called dreamers too, provided your dreams have some relation to reality. There are not many in the country who are endowed with such a gift. If youth will not dream, do you expect these crabbed and aged people to dream? Age has its advantages. It is remarkable for its store of wisdom but there is hardly any activity in old age.

Read of what fascism is doing in Italy and Hitlerism in Germany, the continuous revolution in Spain and of that most marvellous and unprecedented work of construction in history. I mean the unique

1. Aligarh, 15 December 1933. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 19 December 1933.

and unparalleled economic reconstruction in the U.S.S.R. Think of the revolutionary changes and turmoil in this world. Think of what has happened and what is happening under our own eyes. What do you think you would do if you get power to influence the world and national events? Look how the world is changing. It is an extraordinarily fascinating and cheerful prospect for a big mind; for little minds it is not cheerful at all. It is, I think, Trotsky who says that there has been no such revolutionary period as the present in the history of the world; if anyone disapproves of this period, all I can say is that he has chosen an unfortunate moment to be born. The world today is being moved by large forces, almost like an earthquake. It is trembling with fundamental changes. Your country is engaged in a battle for freedom. Don't you think it is a cause you should espouse? I repeat again. Do you dream, and do your dreams point towards action? Do you ever think in these universities of the starving and bare skeletons of our countrymen moved by the elemental force of hunger? Do you ever ask yourself the question—what has happened to them, and if they are going to remain starved and poor for ever? What is going to be your contribution in their struggle? Even if you wish to, you cannot escape these questions. What are the university men going to do about it? Do they seek the solution through government jobs? Are our vast numbers of graduates, the great many of the prospective unemployed, too proud for manual work, going to be an additional burden on our country and people? I am deeply interested in seeing how you solve these problems.

I wonder what is your view of history. You seem to have images of big men as your heroes. Your view of history seems to present a pageant show which throws a light on the past, but does not give you a key to the understanding of the present. Unless you understand the forces which are working beneath the surface, the tremendous forces of hunger and want which have changed the face of the earth—you cannot get the connecting link.

Mr. President, you have referred to the unity of communities in India and to the diversity of cultures. I believe this diversity of cultures has given us the richness which we should preserve. Unless we have unity of outlook, we cannot achieve anything and I admit that these diversities may be a hindrance. It is amazing to note how the cultural unity of the masses has survived even now. That unity is going to endure.

Europe has to face basic and fundamental problems which is not the case with our communal question. Our question is a ghostly thing, and of no substance. It is the result of political reaction. I



admit there may be honest communalists who want to protect their community; that is understandable. Nevertheless communalists take shelter behind political reaction. I submit that if the question is placed before the masses, the solution will be found readily enough.

International conferences have failed because the whole structure of European society is diseased. There are certain conditions and forces that go to destroy the present social structure. The society in its growth wants to break and tear its old dress, and put on a new one. This process in history is called revolution. It is not a question of a few agitators and revolutionaries. It is a tremendous elemental force from below. Politicians do not bring about these revolutions. It is social development that brings them.

You know the history of the noncooperation movement. It began some twelve years ago. Some people thought it was peculiar to India. But it was not a disconnected fact. There were similar movements in western Asia. Gandhi was not there. But the people used fundamentally more or less the same methods. It is difficult to explain. There was something in the air. Elemental forces were at work. There was something much bigger than the human material it used.

When we stress diversities, we ignore the fundamental unity of the country. We of the middle class arrogate to ourselves the exclusive right of being Indian. Outside these walls, there is the real India and if we do not march with the events, it is possible that real India may take things in its hands and march ahead of us.

## 62. Fascism and Communism<sup>1</sup>

The Indian press has been very kind and considerate to me and has given me numerous opportunities of giving publicity to my opinions. I must express my gratitude to it. But sometimes it gives me a shock and one of the biggest shocks that I have recently had has come today from the report of a so-called interview in Delhi given to certain

1. Statement to the press, 18 December 1933. *The Leader*, 20 December 1933. Reprinted in *Recent Essays and Writings*, (Allahabad, 1934), pp. 129-130.

foreign visitors. *The National Call* of Delhi first gave publicity to this and I was amazed to read what I was supposed to have said. *The Free Press Journal* of Bombay has now gone a few steps further and in a seven column headline announces that I have put my cards on the table and declared that I prefer fascism to communism. I did not know that I had so far kept any cards up my sleeve. I have endeavoured during the last three months to give expression to my views in writings and speeches with as much clarity as I am capable of. Those views may be right or wrong but I had at least hoped that they were clear enough and no one could mistake them. To find that they were misunderstood and to be made to say the exact opposite of what I believe and mean to say comes as a shock and a disappointment.

The report of the Delhi interview is so full of errors and mis-statements that it is a little difficult to correct, short of rewriting the whole of it afresh. I do not propose to do so. I shall refer those who are interested in what I believe to read my writings on the subject. But one thing I wish to clear up and that is my attitude to fascism and communism. I do believe that fundamentally the choice before the world today is one between some form of communism and some form of fascism, and I am all for the former, that is communism. I dislike fascism intensely and indeed I do not think it is anything more than a crude and brutal effort of the present capitalist order to preserve itself at any cost. There is no middle road between fascism and communism. One has to choose between the two and I choose the communist ideal. In regard to the methods and approach to this ideal I may not agree with everything that the orthodox communists have done. I think that these methods will have to adapt themselves to changing conditions and may vary in different countries. But I do think that the basic ideology of communism and its scientific interpretation of history is sound.

I hope I have made myself clear. Only a person of unsound mind could express himself in the self-contradictory way which the reported interview makes out. Only a lunatic could favour communism one day and fascism the next day. I flatter myself that I am neither and claim to be sane and, perhaps, sober.



63. To M. R. Masani<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

December 19, 1933

Dear Masani,<sup>2</sup>

I have your letter. I would welcome the formation of socialist groups in the Congress to influence the ideology of the Congress and the country. As you are aware, I have been laying stress on the socialist ideal very much in my recent speeches and writings. I feel that the time has come when the country should face this issue and come to grips with the real economic problems which ultimately matter. All over the world today people are being forced to think in terms of economic and social change and we in India cannot afford to remain in the backwater of pure politics.

The Congress is, as its very name implies, a nationalist organisation and it has so far functioned on the nationalist plane. That was inevitable because in a country under alien domination the problem of political independence has always taken first place. So long as the Congress remains the nationalist Congress this nationalist outlook is bound to dominate the situation. But the world events as well as the natural consequences of our mass struggles have forced the Congress to think, to some extent at least, in terms of economics. Our direct action struggles were, to begin with, purely political; however, the political aspect became tinged with the economic. The Congress, nationalist as it was, began to talk rather vaguely and idealistically in terms of some social change. That process of change of ideology is proceeding apace and is being hastened by economic conditions as well as the continuation of direct action.

The time has undoubtedly come now when we must think more clearly and develop a scientific ideology. This is, so far as I am concerned, one of socialism and I would, therefore, gladly welcome the formation of groups to spread this ideology. But it is not enough to talk merely in terms of an academic ideology, especially at a moment when our country is in the midst of a struggle for freedom. This ideology must be tacked on to action and this action, if it is to bear fruit, must be related to the Congress struggle. Otherwise the socialist group will

1. Maharashtra Government Records, C.I.D. File No. 1/C.S.P./33.

2. (b. 1905); joint secretary, Congress Socialist Party, 1934-39; member, Constituent Assembly, 1947-48, and Lok Sabha, 1949-52, 1957-62 and 1963-71; president, Swatantra Party, 1970-71; author of *Our India*.

become an ineffective, academic and sterile study centre. Even to spread the ideology the effective method is through action which is coordinated to the direct action of the Congress and labour and peasant organisations.

I lay stress on this because I have had sad experience of individuals and groups putting on the colours of socialists and advancing a brave ideology and then doing nothing or, what is worse, just criticising and condemning others who are carrying on the struggle. If a group is meant to give shelter to such persons it is obvious that little can be expected from it. It has become the fashion for some people to cover their own ineffectiveness by strong criticism of the Congress activities. Criticism of ideology or methods must of course be free and welcome but it must not be allowed to become an anti-revolutionary weapon. Although ideologically backward, the Congress is undoubtedly today the most advanced revolutionary organisation in action in India. It must be strengthened and at the same time directed towards newer channels.

I hope therefore this socialist group you suggest will take part in action as well as thought and will join the vanguard of the struggle. I should like to make clear that in the last but one paragraph of this letter I do not refer to people who may differ as to the present Congress programme. Personally I hold that under existing circumstances the present programme is suitable and gives us scope to develop our struggle. But I know that other comrades are of a different opinion and I respect these comrades. In any socialist group both these sets of opinion as well as others must have full scope. What I referred to was the person who has no notion of indulging in any action now or later and finds satisfaction in brave talk only. I attach considerable importance to action as I feel that out of it alone will the masses imbibe revolutionary ideas.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru



## 64. The Trade Union Congress<sup>1</sup>

I am addressing this congress after about four years. These four years have seen great changes in India both in the national and trade union movements. A great struggle for freedom has been carried on and is still continuing. The trade union movement has been split up into various parts and I am not yet clear as to what each part stands for. During my period in prison I was unable to follow the various developments in the labour world. I tried to find out some facts recently but am still not in a position to know the exact situation. While I deplore the lack of unity I feel that to some extent it is inevitable as the struggle proceeds. On one side there are the reformists and constitutionalists, and on the other, revolutionary elements that want a radical change in the social and political structure. Much the same thing is happening in the national movement.

The present position of labour in India is deplorable. There is tremendous unemployment and the wages are cut down and living standards are reduced. Labour only meets these attacks by presenting a united front. World conditions are such that mere crumbs fall from the imperialists' and capitalists' table to the labour masses. As these conditions have deteriorated there is less and less to distribute. Therefore, the only way out for labour is to fight for a radical change which would give power. The labour method of fight is organisation and strike. Many petty strikes are taking place all over the country because of the attempts to lower wages. These individual strikes are bound to fail. If they want them to succeed there should be coordination and organisation, resulting, when time comes, in a general strike to prevent the progressive cutting down of the wages. As a matter of fact the labour problem and the national problem are both coming nearer to each other and have to face the ultimate issue—that is to say, the removal of British imperialism from India. No other solution will satisfy both or bring relief to the masses. I hope, therefore, that there will be an increasing amount of cooperation between the two great movements. The national movement cannot of course, drop its national character and become a purely labour movement. Nor can the labour movement become just a part of the national movement because it represents

1. Speech delivered at the 13th session of the All India Trade Union Congress at Kanpur on 23 December 1933. From *The Tribune*, 30 December 1933. Reprinted in *Recent Essays and Writings*, (Allahabad, 1934), pp. 135-137.

technically the class-conscious workers who are the most revolutionary elements in the population. But there is no reason why the two cannot cooperate wherever possible.

Some people say that after years of struggle our condition is worse than it was before. That is always so when a fight takes place about fundamental matters. Today imperialism and capitalism all over the world are fighting a last-ditch battle to preserve themselves and it is up to labour to organise and strengthen themselves and put their whole weight in the struggle. If they do so and at the same time cooperate with the national movement and influence it, I have no doubt that victory will come to you and not only will thereby bring political freedom in India but social freedom also.

## 65. To J. T. Gwynn<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

December 27, 1933

Dear Mr. Gwynn,

I have received your two letters dated the 15th and 28th November. I have not seen what has appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* from my letter, but as I wrote to you, there was nothing private in what I wrote.<sup>2</sup>

Of course I shall not take it ill if you criticise me at any time.

As regards communism I think I wrote to you that I do not look upon it as a dogma which must be accepted in its entirety but rather as a general outlook on history and on current events as well as on the future. It is this outlook that appeals to me. As for details and methods, I am sure that many changes will have to be made from time to time and from place to place. I would hate to live in a world which is purely mechanical and which does not give individual freedom or rejoices in the infliction of suffering and the suppression of human kindness. I feel that in the modern world the qualities that make life worth living are at the most confined to a few and the vast majority have no chance to indulge in them. It is possible that a communist society while levelling up the masses may do injury to some of these

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. See *ante*, item 10.



qualities. The risk has to be taken. But we can certainly try to preserve these qualities as far as we can and bring them within the reach of all.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 66. On the Municipalisation of Services<sup>1</sup>

I thank you for the honour you have done to me. I am no stranger to Cawnpore, and, even before my time, my father had been intimately connected with the city both as a student and as a lawyer. I am proud to think that I occupy a corner in the hearts of the people of Cawnpore.

Why is this address then given to me now? I think it is not a personal tribute to me but it is a way of expressing sympathy for certain ideals I happen to represent. Some people say that municipal boards should keep away from politics and the like. But if the municipality represented the people how could it ignore the feelings and passions which moved them and stirred them.

I am glad to learn from the address that the board has done something for the improvement of the labourers and the Harijans in regard to the housing conditions and education. A few years ago, I visited the labour quarters in Cawnpore and was shocked and horrified. Nowhere else had I seen anything so bad in housing conditions. I hope that improvement has been made regarding them during the last few years. The municipal board might take some pride in its achievements but the test is not what little has been done but what a great deal remains to be done.

No board can be said to have done its duty so long as any of its citizens are unemployed, starving, homeless or living in a miserable condition. It is often said that financial difficulties come in the way. That is no doubt true under existing circumstances, but it is no excuse for ignoring the essential claims of any group of citizens. A board's duty is to

1. Reply to the welcome address presented by the Kanpur Municipal Board. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 29 December 1933.

provide, among other things, education, sanitation, housing and recreation for all its citizens. A board cannot be judged by the houses of the rich but by the living conditions of the poor.

A much feared word, namely, communism or socialism, means largely municipalization of services and the activities of the country.

## 67. To E. Raghava Reddi<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
January 12, 1934

Dear Friend,<sup>2</sup>

I thank you for the copy of your article which I have read with interest. It contains an interesting analysis of past and present-day conditions. I feel, however, that you have ignored certain important factors in comparing the East with the West. What you call the old Indian economy was not essentially different from the old Western economy. The differences have arisen during the last two hundred years or more by the introduction of new methods of production in the West and now we notice a vast difference between the West and the East. This difference is not between the West and the East as such but between industrial and agricultural economy. It seems to me inevitable, whether one likes it or not, that the agricultural economy should give place to an industrial one. In doing so it has brought many evils in its train but it is possible to separate these evils and keep the good only.

You say that the Indian sages laid stress on the principle that political units must be coterminous with economic units. More or less this was so all over the world in pre-industrial times. But the new industrialism brought the world market and gradually the real economic units became the whole world. Thus today it is impossible to find a solution which is not a world solution based on the world being treated as one unit.

You will also find in the middle ages in Europe the same attempt to regulate prices, to prevent profiteering and insure fair exchange as far as possible, such as you find in India in olden times. But this solution cannot apply now because of the new conditions that have arisen all over the world. Therefore the solution must be of a different kind, something which recognizing the benefits of capitalism and keeping

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. An advocate of Nellore.



them yet does away with the profit motive of capitalism. The only way seems to me socialism. Charity under present conditions is quite ineffective and usually harmful. It can only function with any measure of success in a limited rural economy.

It is easy to say that a spirit of humanity should pervade individual and national activities. One might as well say that all human beings should become saints and sages. Unhappily our wishes remain in the air and if we are to be effective we have to deal with conditions and the human material as we find them.

You say that India is a land of small holdings. This is not true today, although it was certainly true in pre-British times. At present the whole of Bengal, Bihar and the United Provinces are zamindari areas full of enormous holdings.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

#### 68. Message to All India Textile Workers Conference<sup>1</sup>

I would have gladly attended your conference, because I feel that it is dealing with one of the most important problems that faces us today, a problem that not only faces the textile workers and the labour movement, but also affects the freedom struggle in India. I regret, however, that I shall be unable to attend. It is extraordinarily difficult for me to leave Allahabad for the next few days.

It is clear that the textile workers' conditions are progressively deteriorating and attempts are being made to reduce their wages and lower their standards. Many sporadic strikes are taking place all over the world. It is obviously desirable to have concerted action instead of this sporadic action. I hope, therefore, your conference will succeed in evolving a common line of action. Merely submitting to the offensive of the owners of the textile mills will inevitably result in great misery for the workers and in the break up of the trade union organisation. This offensive, therefore, must be combated in an organised and united manner by the workers.

I wish you all success in your labours.

1. Allahabad, 28 January 1934. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 29 January 1934.

**69. To A. H. Khan<sup>1</sup>**

2nd February 1934

Dear Mr. Khan,

I have your letter.<sup>2</sup> I am afraid it is quite impossible to give effect to your proposal. Firstly, because all manner of people are subscribing to the fund and one cannot impose a radical solution on them. Secondly, because the Congress itself as a whole is not a convinced socialist body. Thirdly, because numerous past instances teach us that it is not possible to build up socialist colonies in a capitalist state. All such attempts in Europe and America have failed hopelessly. Fourthly, there is bound to be a great deal of opposition from the government as well as the various groups in the community.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Maharashtra Government Records, Bombay Police Commissioner's File No. 3590/H/II.
2. Khan's letter is not available.



## OFFICIAL REPRESSION

70. M.N. Roy<sup>1</sup>

I met him first in Moscow in November 1927. I had heard a great deal about him and had read his brilliant book<sup>2</sup> on Indian problems and so I looked forward with interest to this meeting, and I was not disappointed.

Six feet tall and well-built physically, M.N. Roy was a fine specimen of Indian humanity. Intellectually, he was alert and keen and even a few minutes' conversation impressed me with his unusual ability. He was obviously a man of intellect, and yet he was something more. He was a man of action also, trying always to fit his action to his thought and ever eager to seize any opportunity that might offer itself. Firmly convinced of the Marxist view of economics and politics and life, he was devoted to the great cause as he conceived it. But he had the pride of intellect also and he was not of the sort that follows another blindly and without questioning.

I was impressed by him. Evidently he was not impressed by me and during the years that followed he wrote many an article in bitter criticism of me and my kind, whom he dubbed, with considerable truth, as petty *bourgeois*. He used hard words which stung, but the memory of our brief meeting remained fresh in my mind and I retained a partiality and a soft corner in my heart for him.

Years passed. One day in 1931, I was surprised to find that a stranger who had called on me was none other than M.N. Roy. I had not expected him, I did not even know that he was in India, but I recognised him immediately and was delighted to meet him.

He had come back to his homeland, after a long absence of about fifteen years, under strange circumstances. He was one of those who were bitterly disliked by the British authorities and a return to the

1. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 17 October 1933. Reprinted in *Recent Essays and Writings*, (Allahabad, 1934), pp. 113-115.

2. Presumably *The Future of Indian Politics*, published in 1926.

land where the Union Jack was supreme meant, almost certainly, prison and suffering. He knew this full well and yet he came. He had disagreed on some grounds of policy and tactics with the predominant Stalin group in the Soviet Union and any pronounced disagreement was not welcomed there. So he left Russia.

But he was not the man to remain idle. The cause called him and the call was too powerful to be ignored. All the pent-up energy of the man of intellect and action pushed him inevitably to his homeland though he knew the fate that awaited him there.

That fate met him some months after his return. None of us could do much for him and yet I wanted to be of some service to him, to show somehow in what regard I held him. I joined his defence committee<sup>3</sup> because of this desire of mine though I knew that such committees are of little real use in India at present and I had little faith in them.

Today he lies in the Bareilly Central Prison and for nearly two years and a half he has been in gaol. He is ill and is said to suffer from a serious constitutional disease. For long unused to a hot climate, he has had to endure the terrible summer heat of northern India in the hard and painful surroundings of a prison. The usual facilities which were granted to some of us in prison are denied to him and, it appears, that even books and writing materials are severely restricted. For an intellectual that is the hardest trial of all.

And so he wastes away and his bright young life, which had already shown such rich promise, slides downhill to the brink. Such is the fate of one of the bravest and ablest of India's sons of the present generation. We are poor enough in human material and it is a tragedy to see the waste of the lives of those who have the ability and capacity to do so much for their country, while others whom nobody can accuse of possessing any intellect or ideals or even decent feelings occupy the seats of power and authority. But it is wrong to think that their lives are wasted. They serve the cause better in this silent way than many who shout from the house tops.

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 297.



## 71. Statement on Fyzabad Prisoners<sup>1</sup>

Over a month ago I drew the attention of the public to the state of affairs in the Rae Bareilly jail and to the hunger strike of two political prisoners because of ill-treatment.<sup>2</sup> About three weeks later the superintendent (who I believe has been transferred to some other place since then) was good enough to issue a brief contradiction which ignored some of the facts that had been stated.<sup>3</sup> Truth apparently is not easy of access in the Rae Bareilly jail and it took the superintendent three weeks to discover it, or rather what he considered a plausible semblance of it.

News comes now from the Fyzabad jail that the jail staff is again on the move and some repetition of last year's notorious occurrences is taking place.<sup>4</sup> The 'B' class prisoners there have again been punished in various ways and have been put in separate cells and pushed and dragged and beaten in the process. Some of them have been transferred to other prisons with fetters on. The condition of one prisoner, who had been ill, became so bad because of this treatment that he had to be discharged suddenly. Letters and interviews have been stopped and those who had gone for an interview had to return disappointed.

Such is the fragmentary news that has come about the happenings and sufferings behind the forbidding walls of the Fyzabad jail. Are we going to have a repetition of last year's long agony?

1. Allahabad, 26 October 1933. *The Leader*, 28 October 1933.

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 540.

3. Issued on 14 October 1933; he contended that the hunger strike was a one day affair and that the convicts, in whose favour the hunger strike was started, had denied being flogged.

4. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 430-431.

## 72. On the Ill-treatment of Fyzabad Prisoners<sup>1</sup>

A certain gentleman of Fyzabad, rejoicing in the title of Khan Sahib, has issued a contradiction of my statement regarding the recent

1. *The Leader*, 8 November 1933.



ill-treatment of 'B' class prisoners in the Fyzabad jail. I do not know his interest in the matter or his source of information but I take it that he is a faithful mouthpiece of the Fyzabad jail staff who hesitate to take the responsibility of making a public statement themselves. Long association with and experience of jail officials in the province has convinced me that from want of practice they develop a constitutional inability to tell the truth, and, especially in any matter concerning themselves, their testimony is useful only in that it helps us to some extent to arrive at a contrary conclusion. I would not ordinarily take the trouble to contradict such statements for they have no value and require no contradiction. But it is desirable that the public should not be misled.

I am assured from reliable sources that the facts I had stated previously, with one exception, were perfectly correct. That one exception was my reference to the transfer of certain prisoners in bar-fetters. I made this statement under an error and I greatly regret it. No bar-fetters were used.

It is entirely untrue to say that the trouble arose because of the refusal of the 'B' class prisoners to sleep inside their barrack from October 1. As a matter of fact they would have been justified in such a refusal as, on the occasion of the settlement following previous trouble last year, it was, I understand, definitely agreed by the jail staff in writing that open air sleeping would be allowed till the end of October. But in spite of this assurance they were locked in from the night of October 1. They submitted to this and there was no trouble of any kind. They used to be locked up at 7-30 p.m. Many days later, on October 9, one of the 'B' class prisoners was asked to see the superintendent in the office. He went but did not return. He was put in a separate barrack as a punishment. When the other politicals learnt of this they requested the superintendent to grant some of them an interview. This was refused. That evening however he came to the 'B' class barrack at 6 p.m. and ordered the prisoners to be locked up at that time. The prisoners were surprised and pointed out to him that their locking up time had so far been 7-30 p.m. and they were not prepared to agree to this sudden change without any reason. Thereupon they were dragged and beaten and about 21 were forcibly locked in the cells and a dozen or so in other barracks. During this assault many received considerable injuries. At least one prisoner fainted in the process. The prisoner whose condition became very bad had undoubtedly been ill but in spite of this he was locked in a hospital barrack without light or water. In the course of this night he grew much worse.



I am told it is stated on behalf of the jail authorities that the prisoners then went on hunger strike. This is entirely untrue. My information is that the jail staff did not supply them with food for five days, till October 14. Thus they were forcibly made to starve for this period.

On October 15 four of the 'B' class prisoners were transferred to other prisons. The so-called minor punishments included, apart from the assaults on the 9th and the subsequent starvation, the reduction of a number of prisoners to 'C' class and stoppage of letters and interviews.

These are some of the facts which I think are reasonably established. There are others also but I do not wish to lengthen this statement. No doubt the jail staff and the very convenient and obliging Khan Sahib may not approve of facts, and it is easy enough to sit entrenched in the jail office, prevent a fair enquiry, and deny everything.

### **73. To the Superintendent, District Jail, Allahabad<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad

December 31, 1933

Dear Sir,

In the course of the last few days a number of our colleagues and friends have been arrested and kept in the Allahabad District Jail as under-trial prisoners. Attempts to interview them or to send them food or other belongings from outside have failed because the jailor would not permit these. I do not know under what rule this permission was refused because so far as I am aware under-trial prisoners are allowed interviews as well as certain facilities in regard to food, clothes and beddings. Further, I understand that friends other than relatives are also permitted to interview under-trial prisoners at frequent intervals. I have myself had experience of being an under-trial prisoner on many occasions and the superintendents of the jails in which I happened to be kept told me so on several occasions and allowed these facilities to me. I have also personal knowledge of these facilities being allowed to many other under-trial prisoners of various classes.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

Another fact which I should like to bring to your notice is the uncertainty which seems to prevail in the minds of some of the jail officials of the Allahabad District Jail as to what should be done in regard to these matters. On several occasions, interviews have been promised for the next day but when the people seeking an interview came the next day they were refused the interview often after having been kept waiting for an hour or two. May I suggest that whatever the rules applicable may be they should be given publicity and in any event the discourtesy of making promises which are not kept and keeping people waiting for long periods without any ostensible reasons, be discontinued.

The refusal of the facilities for under-trial prisoners has sometimes untoward consequences as in the case of Pandit Rup Narain Tripathi. Interviews were not allowed with him as an under-trial and his personal and business affairs could not thus be discussed by him with those who were responsible for them. Nor could any discussion take place between him and his advisers as to his case. His case was suddenly taken up by the magistrate without any previous intimation to anybody—relative or friend—and in the middle of the Christmas holidays when the courts are supposed to be closed. Thus Pandit Rup Narain Tripathi had to forego the advantage of any consultation in regard to his personal and business matters as well as in regard to his case, and possibly his defence, before he was suddenly confronted with the trial itself and was convicted in the absence, apparently, of all friends or relatives.

There are at present, I believe, several under-trial prisoners in the Allahabad District Jail, among them being Messrs. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, Mohanlal Gautam, Jairam Tiwari, Fatehbadur Singh, Sarju Prasad, Nand Gopal, Bhagat Singh, Kedar Nath and a number of others. I shall be obliged if you will kindly let me know if these under-trial prisoners can interview friends and can be sent from outside the usual articles permitted by the jail rules.

I shall be grateful for an early reply. If you wish to telephone to me, my number is 350.

Yours faithfully,  
Jawaharlal Nehru



74. To Purnima Banerji<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
11 Jan. 1934

Dear Nora,<sup>2</sup>

I have your letter and its enclosure.

I am afraid it is not possible to authenticate the statement about the N.W.F.P. in the usual way. The conditions prevailing in the province are such that no proper investigation can take place. The person who sent me the statement is thoroughly reliable but obviously he was not a witness of all that is stated. He has had to depend to a large extent on the accounts and statements of others. Accounts of jail treatment are usually given by prisoners on discharge or sometimes they are posted when prisoners are being transferred from one prison to another. Well-known men and women are not usually treated very badly; it is the average volunteer who has to bear the brunt of it. He makes a statement and it is denied by the authority.

How is it to be proved? If there was an enquiry, an independent one and not merely departmental, something might come out. When even Malaviyaji's statements about the Benares women's affair<sup>3</sup> and the Calcutta Congress assaults<sup>4</sup> are sought to be discredited what can one expect of others?

I realise the difficulty of your correspondent. If he publishes the statement it is bound to be denied. What is he to do then? My supplying him with the names of a number of persons who have made written statements about ill-treatment will not help him at all as these persons are unknown to the outside world. As a matter of fact I have got some such depositions with me.

Under these circumstances the Frontier statement had better not be published as it stands. But a reference to it might be made in the

1. U.P. Government, Intelligence Department, Special Branch Records.
2. (1911-1951); sister of Aruna Asaf Ali; imprisoned several times during the freedom struggle; member, Constituent Assembly, 1946.
3. Eight Congress women volunteers were ill-treated in a police station in Banaras on 12 March 1932. Malaviya's statement, published on 6 February 1933, refuted the district magistrate's claim that the whole incident was "concocted for political purposes."
4. The statement of 11 April 1933 related to the assaults made at three different places at Calcutta on three batches of delegates from the U.P.



*India Bulletin*.<sup>5</sup> The full statement however might be shown to individuals and even to high officials in London. The position that might be taken up is that very grave allegations have been and are being made. These may be exaggerated here and there and it may be difficult under the existing circumstances to substantiate them, but responsible people, who have met some of the sufferers believe that there is a great deal of truth in them. An independent enquiry should therefore be demanded. Before a public demand is made, private efforts might be made. If these fail, a public demand can be made.

Personally I am convinced, after meeting people from the Frontier, that a disgusting and cruel terrorism has been rampant there on behalf of the authorities. But I can have no personal knowledge of these events. I can only rely on the odd evidence that reaches me. In a legal sense this may not be sufficient, and in any event, when allegations are denied, it becomes a question of word against word.

As for the question—sections 107, 108, 109 are the preventive sections of the Indian Penal Code (or probably the Code of Criminal Procedure). They can be easily referred to anything. These sections are not meant for those who have committed offences but for bad characters who are likely to commit offences. The English law, and most of the legal systems, have no such provisions. Ordinarily these sections are meant for those who are considered bad characters by the police. The sections have been used for political bad characters in recent years. Sureties and bonds are demanded for stated periods, usually one year, and if those sureties and bonds are not forthcoming, the person concerned is sent to prison for the full period. In the Frontier Province this one year seems to be extended to three years. Usually such heavy sureties are demanded that it is quite impossible to find them, even if the person was willing enough to furnish them. Thus people have to spend as much as three years in prison, not for an offence committed but for fear lest they might commit an offence. I have not the sections before me as I write but a reference to them will clear up the position. Sec. 108 is, I believe, for politicals or those who are seditiously inclined.

These preventive sections have been largely used all over India and Congressmen have been roped in as *badmashes* and bad characters. It is worthy of note that these prisoners are not considered politicals and are not included in the official returns of civil disobedience or

5. Published from February 1931 as the journal of the Friends of India Society in London.



other political prisoners whose number is brought down by treating them under the preventive sections as bad characters.

Captain Cole<sup>6</sup> has a very bad reputation and there are many complaints about him but under existing conditions nothing can be substantiated. This applies also to Haripur jail which has been notorious for its ill-treatment. I must give the same answer about the six months' solitary confinement. Allegations to this effect have reached me and names have also been mentioned but I am quite unable to authenticate them. What probably happens is that technically there is a break in the solitary confinement but in effect it continues for long periods.

I am sending you copies of two notices and two statements about happenings in Midnapur in Bengal.<sup>7</sup> Both these were sent by me to various papers here. The notices were published by most of them. The statements have only appeared in one or two newspapers. The others were afraid. The statements, you will observe, are signed. There is no doubt that they give a correct account of what is taking place round about Midnapur.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

6. Captain G.A. Cole, assistant commissioner, Peshawar, 1932-35.

7. The notices were served by the government on Congress workers directing them to welcome Garhwali soldiers at Contai on 16 December 1933 and ordering them to salute the British flag. On refusing to do so, the Congress workers, according to their statement, had been beaten up.

## 75. Earthquakes—Natural and Political<sup>1</sup>

The Indian people have been stirred, as seldom before, by the tragedy of the earthquakes in Bihar and Nepal.<sup>2</sup> The poorest, in spite of their dire poverty, and the lower middle class, which has suffered so much

1. 31 January 1934, J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. This was the heading given by Jawaharlal. The article was published in *Vartman*, 6 February 1934, under the title *Political Earthquake in East Bengal* and also in *Nation*, New York, 11 April 1934, under the heading *The Humiliation of India*.

2. See *post*, item 86.



from the trade depression and unemployment, have given generously, perhaps more generously than the rich and the well-to-do, for the relief of the sufferers from the earthquake. We have stood up bravely to face the unthinking cruelty of nature and have tried to fight it and tone down its tragic effects.

Nature is often pitiless and cruel. It plays its pranks regardless of what happens to the millions of mites that crawl on the surface of the earth. We feel helpless and bow to it, or we combat it and try to control it, according to our temperaments and the measure of strength and will within us. But there are other earthquakes, human earthquakes, which are not caused by unthinking nature but by thinking men. Human masses, when their lot becomes unbearable, rise up and break up the order that enslaves them. And there are political earthquakes when a government, fearful for its existence, loses all self-control, all sense of perspective, all dignity, and begins to behave as a mob that has no clear purpose in view except that of destruction and the desire to revenge itself on its adversaries. It forgets even the main purpose of government—the provision of security to those it claims to govern, and scenting danger everywhere, hits out blindly at all and sundry. If it is autocratic or despotic, it suffers all the more from that common disease of governments and individuals in power, paranoia. There is a famous Latin saying which applies to it at this stage of growth or decline.

Fifteen years ago we saw such an eruption on the part of the government in the Punjab and the world remembers Jallianwala Bagh and the 'crawling order' and the many other ferocious accompaniments of Martial Law. Soon followed the era of the Black and Tans<sup>3</sup> in Ireland with their blood lust and reprisals. And now we see the government in India again excelling itself in this manner in parts of Bengal. Chittagong and Midnapur, like Amritsar, have become black symbols of the working of imperialism and of the attempt to humiliate a great nation.

Do most of us realise, I sometimes wonder, the significance of what is happening in Midnapur and Chittagong? Or have our feelings been dulled and our sensibilities coarsened by the long and advancing tide of repression? The Great War with its bath of blood and its vast destruction of human life produced this result on the peoples of Europe. And it seems that some such process is at work in India

3. Soldiers specially recruited to crush the Irish rebellion of 1919-20, notorious for their brutality.



today both among the rulers and the ruled. How else are we to explain these amazing occurrences in Bengal and their reactions on our people?

It is a strange record worthy of preservation for an incredulous posterity. Because of the acts of certain odd individuals large military forces are brought from distant places; they occupy territories in a way no alien army occupied enemy land in war time. They treat almost the whole population as suspect and force even the boys and girls of tender age to go about with cards of identity of various hues with photographs attached. They limit the movements of the general population and even lay down the dress that must be worn. They turn out people from their houses at a few hours' notice. They close schools and treat their children *en bloc* as enemy persons. They force people, under various pains and penalties, to offer public welcomes to themselves, and to salute the flag which has become the sign of humiliation to them. And those that disobey or refuse to bend have to suffer heavily for it and to face reprisals.

Not satisfied with all this, they have interned for a whole week the whole of the young Hindu population of Chittagong.<sup>4</sup> Trains and steamers and motor traffic have been made to stop their usual functioning for a period, law courts have been closed for two days and Chittagong has been converted into a beleaguered city or a vast prison. The week passed by, and then the period of internment for a large number of people was extended to a month. Surely these wholesale orders affecting the entire population can only be matched from the annals of the Inquisition, when William of Orange stood up as the champion of his people's freedom and Alba invoked the Inquisition to pass sentence on a whole people.

All this has taken place and yet the press hardly dares to say anything above a whisper lest laws and ordinances encompass its ruin. The press is largely a silent witness of these happenings; not so the high officials who wield for a day the magic wand of power. We have often enough admonitions and threats from them of a still more terrible future, of the new weapons that are continually being forged to suppress a hapless population. One of the most notable performances of this kind was the recent speech of the commissioner of Midnapur who unburdened himself at length and gave us a glimpse of his and his government's mind. That was a precious utterance

4. On 18 January 1934 the district magistrate ordered all Hindu men up to the age of 25 in the eight *thanas* adjoining the *kotwali* of Chittagong to remain indoors for one week.



which told us more of the way despotic governments function than all the professors and text books could have done. I ventured to suggest in Calcutta that this speech of the commissioner should be widely distributed in pamphlet form so that people may know to what depths of vulgarity and bluster even a seemingly powerful government can sink when it has lost all moral hold on the people it governs.

But all this has not been enough. And now we are told of new laws extending the penalty of death for certain offences under the Indian Arms Act<sup>5</sup> (apparently the carrying of unlicensed arms), for a still further muzzling of the press,<sup>6</sup> so that the Indian press cannot publish anything at all disapproved by the local government. There must be no expression of undue concern or sympathy for detenus in detention camps or for convicts in the Andaman Islands. We may not show that it matters to us in the least whether they live or die, whether they are ill or well, whether they are treated humanely or inhumanly. They have been hunted down and cast out of the human pale, and human considerations must not apply to such castaways.

We have been long used to the proscription of books. But this was not enough. In future not merely individual books but whole 'classes of literature', specified by the government are going to be proscribed. Why take the trouble to read and judge a book when it is far easier to stop the source at the base by condemning whole groups and classes of literature? The next step presumably should be to attack the root of the problem by declaring that all reading of books and newspapers, except those produced through government agencies, is illegal.

Determined to improve the morals of our youth, the government wants to arm its district magistrates with still wider powers to control and restrict the movements of young persons, even though such persons have done nothing to bring them in touch with the wide-flung net of the laws and ordinances. So the district magistrate must be empowered to take action as soon as he suspects that someone might keep bad company. And then again government has to face a difficult problem. To send them to gaol, or to intern them, is the obvious way to treat those who look suspicious. But they become worse in

5. The Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Bill of 1934 provided for death penalty for possession and manufacture of arms.
6. The Act also demanded the forfeiture of security for publication of prohibited information expressing "undue concern and sympathy for detenus and convicts in Andaman Islands or the publication of identity of witnesses before special courts."



gaol because of their association with other undesirables and to let them loose on society when they come out of prison would obviously be a risky business. Therefore the safest place for them is the prison or the detention camp, or at any rate their movements should be severely restricted.

Breaches of various orders apparently continue even though the penalty is two years' imprisonment. What can a government do except to increase the penalty? And so the proposed legislation increases the two years to seven years.

And finally the temporary repressive laws which were due to expire in 1935 are to be made permanent. This will no doubt be some consolation to those who grumble about the delay in the coming of the 'Reforms'. They will realise that the 'Reforms' are coming, if they have not already arrived.

There seems to be just one lacuna in these schemes of 'Reforms'. It is just possible that some people may be left out in spite of all the careful thought that has been given to the framing of the existing and the proposed legislation. Instead of a variety of laws and ordinances and orders and rules, it would be simpler to have one comprehensive enactment laying down that every Indian must consider himself as if he was in prison (C class), all schools and colleges to be abolished, all newspapers and books suppressed, and every morning we must all salute the Union Jack, divine service twice a day should consist of the singing of the British National Anthem, and the afternoon might be profitably devoted to listening to an inspiring address on the virtues of the British rule. This arrangement would have much to commend it. In these days of world-wide depression and deficit budgets there would be much saving of money by the stoppage of educational and many other services and the employment of free labour by government. Many offices could also be combined in single individuals. Thus the district magistrate could also become the prison superintendent for the whole district.

Are we drifting to this? And is it not a mockery for us to talk of constitutions and All Parties Conferences and 'Reforms' and elections and the like when this grim tragedy faces us?

## THE COMMUNAL PROBLEM

### 76. To Mohammad Alam<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

October 29, 1933

My dear Alam,

Your letter. I do not seem to have received the articles from your paper which, you say, were sent to me.<sup>2</sup> It is just possible that I may have missed them in the prevailing confusion in our house. I have, however, been following your speeches as reported in the press from time to time. I confess that I feel that little can be done in this way. I think the communal problem does not stand by itself but is part of the larger social problem of India and the world. I have given expression to some of my views on the larger issues in the recent newspaper articles. Looked at from the national point of view I think that the most important thing for us is to carry on our civil disobedience struggle. Only through that can we divert attention from the wretched communal wrangles of today. I have been feeling very angry at the proceedings of the Hindu Mahasabha and like bodies in Ajmer recently.<sup>3</sup> It is scandalous the way these people of the Mahasabha cover their extremely narrow and selfish mentality under a cloak of so-called nationalism. As a matter of fact they represent, as the resolutions show, a group of upper middle class, Hindu capitalists, landlords and hangers-on of princes. If I have the time I shall write about them.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Alam had sent a copy of the constitution of the Anti-Communal League along with his articles published in *Tiryaq*.

3. On 14 October 1933 the Hindu Mahasabha passed a resolution which strongly disapproved of any movement advocating extinction of capitalists and landlords as a class.



## 77. The Hindu Mahasabha and Communalism<sup>1</sup>

I have long been of opinion that the Hindu Mahasabha is a small reactionary group pretending to speak on behalf of the Hindus of India of whom it is very far from being representative. None the less misapprehensions have been created by their high-sounding titles and resounding phrases and it is time that these misapprehensions are removed. Nothing in recent months has pained me quite so much as the activities of the Mahasabha group culminating in the resolutions passed at Ajmer.

Going a few steps further, the Arya Kumar Sabha, which is presumably an offshoot of the Hindu Mahasabha, has proclaimed its policy to be one of elimination of Muslims and Christians from India and the establishment of a Hindu Raj.<sup>2</sup> This statement makes it clear what the pretensions of the Mahasabha about Indian nationalism amount to. Under cover of seeming nationalism, the Mahasabha not only hides the rankest and narrowest communalism but also desires to preserve the vested interests of the group of big Hindu landlords and the princes. The policy of the Mahasabha, as declared by its responsible leaders, is one of cooperation with the foreign government so that, by abasing themselves before it, they might get a few crumbs. This is a betrayal of the freedom struggle, denial of every vestige of nationalism and suppression of every manly instinct in the Hindus. The Mahasabha shows its attachment to vested interests by openly condemning every form of socialism and social change. Anything more degrading, reactionary, anti-national, anti-progressive and harmful than the present policy of the Hindu Mahasabha is difficult to imagine.

The leaders of the Mahasabha must realise the inevitable consequences of this policy of their lining up with the enemies of Indian freedom and most reactionary elements in the country. It is for the rest of India, Hindu and non-Hindu, to face them squarely and oppose them and treat them as enemies of freedom and all that we

1. Speech delivered at the Banaras Hindu University on 12 November 1933. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 15 November 1933. Reprinted in *Recent Essays and Writings*, (Allahabad, 1934), pp. 45-46.
2. The report of the resolution passed by the Arya Kumar Sabha, the youth wing of the Arya Samaj, was later found to be incorrect.

are striving for. It is not a mere matter of condemnation and dissociation, though of course there is to be both these, but one of active and persistent opposition to the most opportunist and stupid of policies.

## 78. On His Criticism of the Hindu Mahasabha<sup>1</sup>

I am glad that the remarks I made at Banaras regarding the Hindu Mahasabha have galvanized a number of people and made them think furiously. This thinking has even taken the form of personal denunciation of me.<sup>2</sup> This personal aspect is unimportant and will pass because the question is far too important and vital to be considered in relation to personalities. I hope to say something in reply to the criticisms later. But I should like to point out that my criticisms related to the Hindu Mahasabha chiefly because I was addressing a purely Hindu audience. There was no point in my tracing Muslim or other non-Hindu communalism there as the average Hindu is sufficiently aware of the feelings of others. It is always difficult to appreciate fully the weaknesses of oneself or one's own community. As I have stated, my remarks against communalism and anti-national activities apply in an equal measure to all communal organizations in India—Muslim, Hindu, Sikh etc. There seems to be a race between them as to which can be more communal than the other. For a long time past I had remained quiet on the subject because I wished to ignore this aspect of Indian public life and hoped that national activities would gradually divert people's attention from it. But matters have come to such a pass that I felt silence on the subject was in itself a compromise and acceptance of this evil. We all know of the amazing communal and reactionary outlook and activities of the Muslim

1. Interview at Allahabad, 21 November 1933. From *The Leader*, 23 November 1933.
2. In a letter published in *The Leader* of 20 November 1933, Bhai Parmanand attributed Jawaharlal's criticism of the Mahasabha to the fact that owing to his "early training" and upbringing abroad "he is incapable of thinking as a Hindu."



communalists in India. These require no publicity but there is a misapprehension in some quarters that the Hindu communalists are of a greyer colour and not quite so black as the others. This notion is thoroughly unjustified as the attitude of the Hindu Mahasabha and the many other Hindu organizations, specially in north India, connected or unconnected with the Mahasabha, has conclusively demonstrated during the last year. The statements and evidence before the Joint Select Committee in England as well as numerous speeches and resolutions chiefly in the Punjab show this.<sup>3</sup> Leading members of the Hindu Mahasabha and other communalists have deliberately advocated cooperation with British imperialism in the hope of getting some odd favour. This attitude is both anti-national and reactionary, and even from the narrow point of view of Hindus, foolish and short-sighted.

There seems to be some mystery about the resolutions passed by the Arya Kumar Sabha at Ajmer. My reference to a certain resolution has called forth denials, although the denial does not tell us exactly what the resolution was. This can easily be verified and I shall be very glad indeed to learn that my information was wrong. I received a copy of that resolution apparently from some official of the Sabha for my information. This resolution was also received by others and Dr. Māhomed Ullah Jung<sup>4</sup> has given publicity to the text of it.<sup>5</sup> I shall be glad if the Arya Kumar Sabha will publish their resolutions and if it appears that we have been victims of a hoax I shall gladly and willingly express my regret to the Arya Kumar Sabha. But apart from this my main criticism would hold as it is based specially on the activities of Hindu communalists during the last many months.

3. On 31 July 1933, they protested that the government's decision on the communal problem was unjust to the Hindus and the separation of Sind was an "ex-parte judgement."

4. A resident of Allahabad.

5. In a letter to the editor published in *The Leader* of 20 November 1933.

79. To Bhai Parmanand<sup>1</sup>

26/11/1933

My dear Bhaiji,<sup>2</sup>Thank you for your letter of Nov. 24th.<sup>3</sup>

I recollect now the incident you refer to. It was in 1921 probably in the month of May or June. Shaukat Ali and I were visiting a number of towns in the eastern districts of the U.P. on a Congress tour. There had been some mention in the press about the abduction of a Hindu girl and some excitement had been caused thereby. As we were likely to pass near the village in question during our tour, Gandhiji asked us, if possible, to visit the village and enquire into the matter.

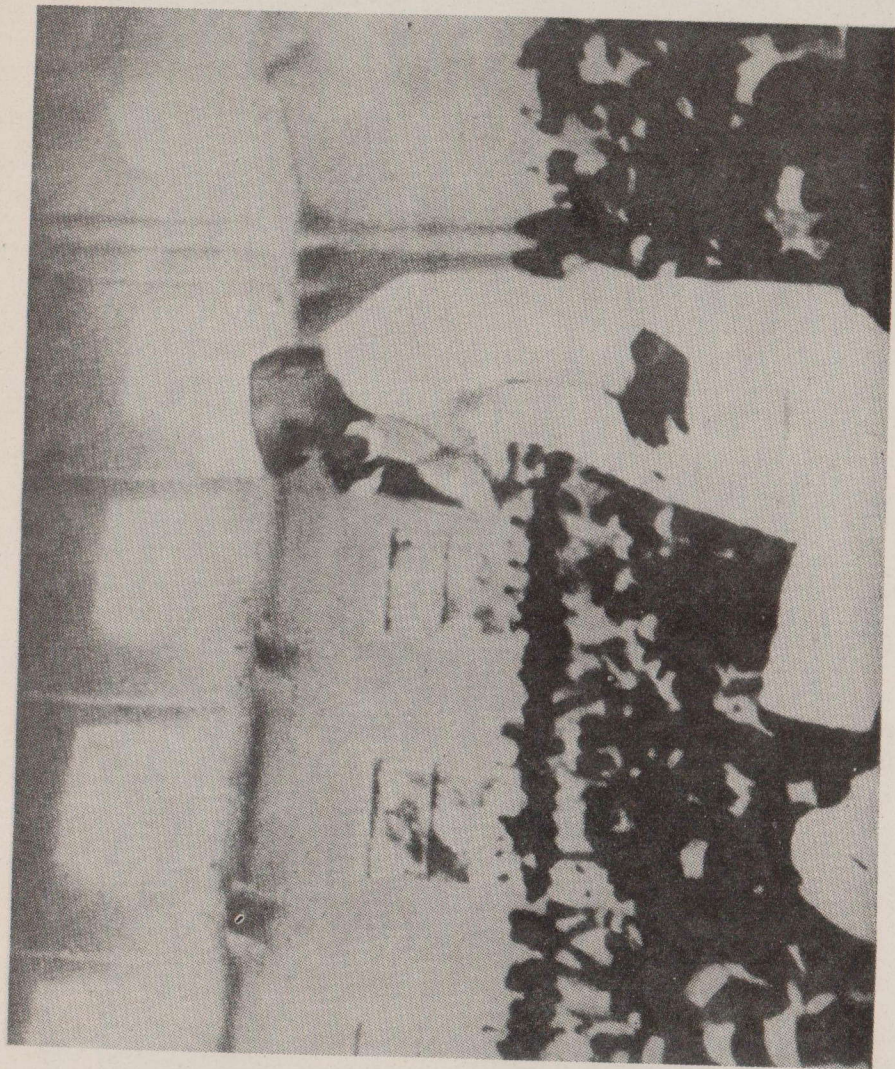
The village was, I think somewhere near Mau and on our way from Azamgarh to Ballia our train stopped for nearly two hours at Mau, or perhaps we had to change there. That very evening we had to address a meeting at Ballia so we could not stay at Mau long. We decided to pay a hurried visit to the village during the two hours at Mau. When we reached Mau we found that the village was five miles or so away and the only conveyance available was an *ekka*. It was the middle of the day in midsummer and it was very hot. Shaukat Ali said that it was impossible for him to mount a rickety *ekka* as it was bound to break, and he could not possibly walk ten miles. He was fasting on account of the *Ramzan*. I decided to go by myself on the *ekka*. I reached the village and met the girl and talked to her for about a quarter of an hour. She was a grown-up young woman and she told me (as far as I remember I spoke to her apart from the others) that she had left her home of her own free will and had come away willingly with the Muslim youth in question. Further that she had accepted Islam and married the Muslim youth and was not prepared to go back to her old house. I tried to assure her that she need not be afraid of anybody but should tell me the truth and her

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (1874-1943); prominent Arya Samajist and Hindu Mahasabha leader; sentenced in connection with the first Ghadar Conspiracy to life imprisonment, 1915, released in 1929; Chancellor of Punjab Vidyapith in 1934.

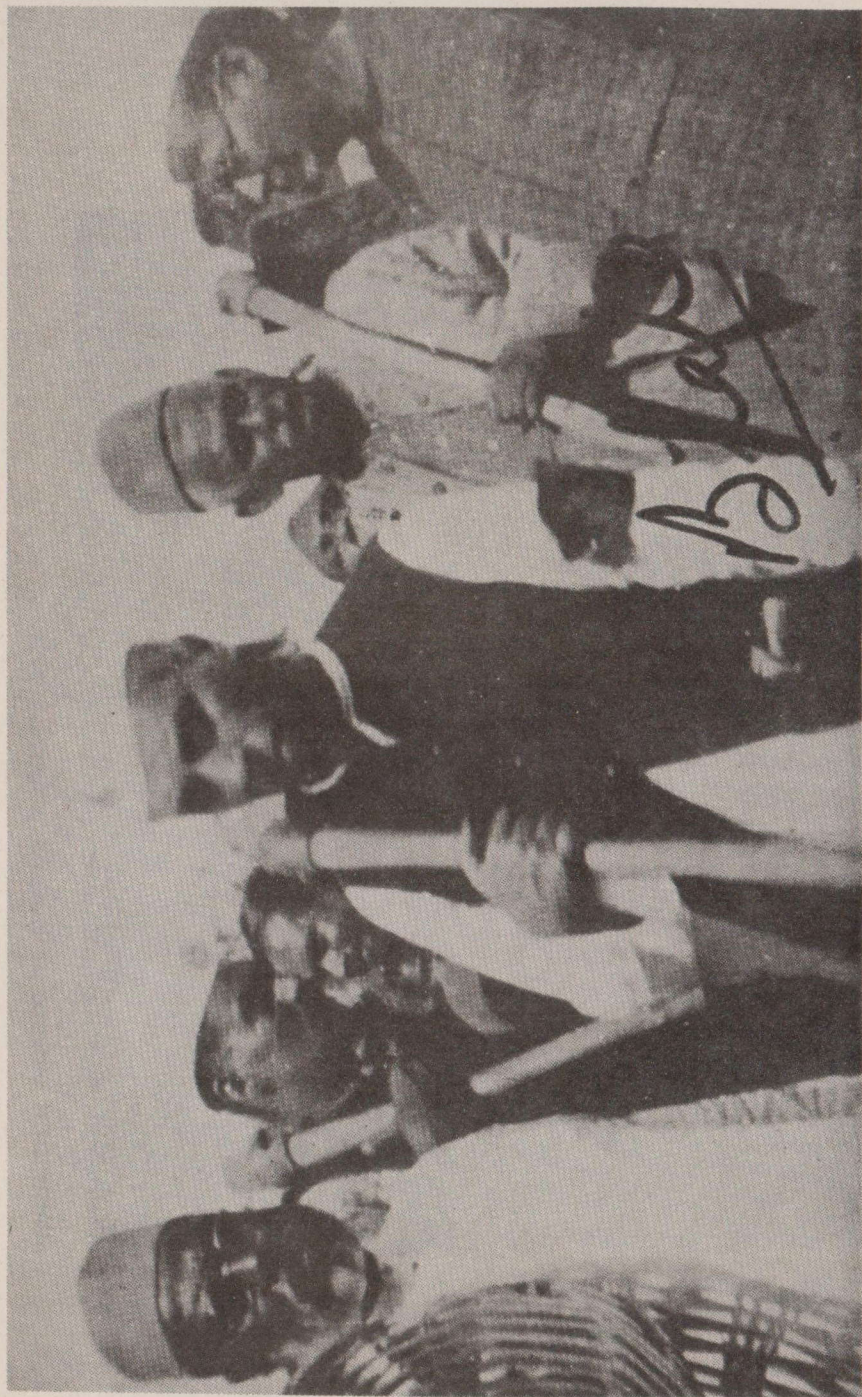
3. In reply to Jawaharlal's telegram drawing attention to a newspaper report that Bhai Parmanand had called him a coward, Bhai Parmanand denied it but said he had referred to an incident of 1921. For details of this incident, see *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 174-176.





ADDRESSING A MEETING AT BANARAS, NOVEMBER 1933





EARTHQUAKE RELIEF OPERATION IN MUZAFFARPUR, BIHAR, 22 JANUARY 1934



real feelings. Still she repeated what she had said before. I felt helpless in the matter and could do nothing more.

My conversation with the girl and the others were so prolonged that I could not come back to Mau in time for the train. So I tried, by dashing across the fields, to catch the train at the next station which was not far. But I missed the train. There was no other train and the station master was good enough to provide me with a trolley which took me quite twenty or thirty miles. I could not reach Ballia but I just managed to catch up Shaukat Ali on his way back from Ballia. The poor station master, I think, was subsequently dismissed for his courtesy to me in allowing me the use of a trolley.

On my return to Allahabad I wrote an account of what had happened and sent it on to Gandhiji. So far as I remember, I did not issue any statement to the press.

The incident took place over twelve years ago and naturally my recollection of it is a little vague. I may be wrong in some minor particulars but I think I have given the facts correctly. I do not know anything (or have forgotten) about the girl's suicide.

As for the report that you had called me a 'coward', please do not attach any importance to it. I can assure you that I do not. As you say you did not say the word, there the matter ends. But even if you had mentioned the word in a moment of excitement it would have had little significance. All of us, who feel strongly about anything, are apt to be a little vehement at times. I know that I am often guilty of this and, knowing my own weakness, I try to be tolerant in this respect to others. Those in public life cannot afford to be thin-skinned. So please dismiss this matter from your mind.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 80. Hindu and Muslim Communalism<sup>1</sup>

My recent remarks on Hindu communalists and the Hindu Mahasabha have evidently touched a sensitive spot of many people and

1. 27 November 1933. *The Tribune*, 30 November 1933. Reprinted in *Recent Essays and Writings*, (Allahabad, 1934), pp. 47-61.

have produced strong reactions. For many days every morning the newspapers brought me a tonic in the shape of criticisms and condemnations and I must express my gratitude for these, to all who indulged in them. It is not given to everybody to see himself as others see him, and since this privilege has been accorded to me and my numerous failings in education, up-bringing, heredity, culture, as well as those for which I am personally responsible, pointed out to me gently, I must need feel grateful. I shall try to profit by the chiding I have received but I am afraid I have outgrown the age when the background of one's thought and action can be easily changed.

I have not hastened to reply to the criticisms because I thought it as well for excitement to cool so that we might consider the question dispassionately and without reference to personalities. It is a vital question for all of us Indians, and especially for those who from birth or choice are in the Hindu fold.

But I must begin with an expression of regret and apology. It is clear that some of us were the victims of a hoax in regard to the alleged resolution of the Arya Kumar Sabha which was sent to us and in which it was stated that there could be no peace in India so long as there were any Muslims or Christians in the country. It has been demonstrated that no such resolution was passed by the Arya Kumar Sabha at Ajmer or elsewhere; indeed no resolution of a political nature was passed by that body at all. I am exceedingly sorry for having permitted myself to fall into a trap of someone's devising and I desire to express my deep regret to the Arya Kumar Sabha.

I must also express my regret both to the Arya Kumar Sabha and the Hindu Mahasabha for having presumed that they were associated with each other.

In regard to my main contention, however, I confess that I am unrepentant and I still hold that the activities of Hindu communal organizations, including the Mahasabha, have been communal, anti-national and reactionary. Of course this cannot apply to all the members of these organizations; it can apply only to the majority group in them or the group that controls them. Organisations also change their policies from time to time and what may be true today may not have been wholly true yesterday. So far as I have been able to gather, Hindu communal organizations, especially in the Punjab and in Sind, have been progressively becoming more narrowly communal and anti-national and politically reactionary.

I am told that this is a consequence of Muslim communalism and reactionary policy and I have been chided for not blaming Muslim



communalists. I have already pointed out that it would have been entirely out of place for me, speaking to a Hindu audience, to draw attention to Muslim communalists and reactionaries. It would have been preaching to the converted, as the average Hindu is well aware of them. It is far more difficult to see one's own fault than to see the failings of others. I also hold that it serves little purpose, in the prevailing atmosphere of mutual suspicion, to preach to the other community, although of course, whenever necessity arises, facts must be faced and the truth stated.

I do not think that the Muslim communal organizations, chief among whom are the Muslim All Parties Conference and the Muslim League, represent any large group of Muslims in India except in the sense that they exploit the prevailing communal sentiment. But the fact remains that they claim to speak for Muslims and no other organization has so far risen which can successfully challenge that claim. Their aggressively communal character gives them a pull over the large number of nationalist Muslims who merge themselves in the Congress. The leaders of these organizations are patently and intensely communal. That, from the very nature of things, one can understand. But it is equally obvious that most of them are definitely anti-national and political reactionaries of the worst kind. Apparently they do not even look forward to any common nation developing in India. At a meeting in the British House of Commons last year, the Aga Khan, Sir Mohammad Iqbal and Dr. Shafaat Ahmad Khan are reported (in *The Statesman* of December 31, 1932) to have laid stress on "the inherent impossibility of securing any merger of Hindu and Muslim, political or indeed social, interests." The speakers further pointed out "the impracticability of ever governing India through anything but a British agency." These statements leave no loophole for nationalism or for Indian freedom, now or even in the remote future.

I do not think that these statements represent the views of Muslims generally or even of most of the communally inclined Muslims. But they are undoubtedly the views of the dominant and politically clamorous group among the Muslims. It is an insult to one's intelligence to link these views with those of nationalism and freedom and of course any measure of real economic freedom is still further away from them. Essentially, this is an attitude of pure reaction—political, cultural, national, social. And it is not surprising that this should be so if one examines the membership of these organizations. Most of the leading members are government officials, ex-officials, ministers, would-be ministers, knights and title-holders, big landlords, etc. Their leader is the Aga Khan, the head of a wealthy religious group, who



combines in himself, most remarkably, the feudal order and the politics and habits of the British ruling class, with which he has been intimately associated for many years.

Such being the leadership of the Muslims in India and at the Round Table Conference it is no wonder that their attitude should be reactionary. This reactionary policy went so far as to lead many of the Muslim delegates in London to seek an alliance with the most reactionary elements in British public life—Lord Lloyd and company. And the final touch was given to it when Gandhiji offered personally to accept every single one of their communal demands,<sup>2</sup> however illogical and exaggerated they might be, on condition that they assured him of their full support in the political struggle for independence. That condition and offer was not accepted and it became clear that what stood in the way was not even communalism but political reaction.

Personally I think that it is generally possible to cooperate with communalists provided the political objective is the same. But between progress and reaction, between those who struggle for freedom and those who are content with servitude, and even wish to prolong it, there is no meeting ground. And it is this political reaction which has stalked the land under cover of communalism and taken advantage of the fear of each community of the other. It is the fear complex that we have to deal with in these communal problems. Honest communalism is fear; false communalism is political reaction.

To some extent this fear is justified, or is at least understandable, in a minority community. We see this fear overshadowing the communal sky in India as a whole so far as Muslims are concerned; we see it as an equally potent force in the Punjab and Sind so far as the Hindus are concerned, and in the Punjab, the Sikhs.

It was natural for the British Government to support and push on the reactionary leaders of the Muslims and to try to ignore the nationalist ones. It was also natural for them to accede to most of their demands in order to strengthen their position in their own community and weaken the national struggle. A very little knowledge of history will show that this has always been done by ruling powers. The Muslim demands did not in any way lessen the control of the British in India. To some extent they helped the British to add to

2. At the meeting of the Minorities Committee from 1 to 8 October 1931, Mahatma Gandhi agreed to accept all the demands of the Muslim representatives.



their proposed special powers and to show to the world how necessary their continued presence in India was.

I have written all this about the attitude of the Muslim communalist leaders not only to complete the picture but because it is a necessary preliminary to the understanding of the Hindu communal attitude. There is no essential difference between the two. But there was this difference that the Congress drew into its ranks most of the vital elements of Hindu society and it dominated the situation and thus circumstances did not permit the Hindu communalists to play an important role in politics. The Hindu Mahasabha leaders largely confined themselves to criticising the Congress. When however there was a lull in Congress activities, automatically the Hindu communalists came more to the front and their attitude was frankly reactionary.

It must be remembered that the communalism of a majority community must of necessity bear a closer resemblance to nationalism than the communalism of a minority group. One of the best tests of its true nature is what relation it bears to the national struggle. If it is politically reactionary or lays stress on communal problems rather than national ones then it is obviously anti-national.

The Simon Commission, as is well known, met with a widespread and almost unanimous boycott in India. Bhai Parmanandji, in his recent presidential address at Ajmer, says that this boycott was unfortunate for the Hindus, and he approvingly mentions that the Punjab Hindus (probably under his guidance) cooperated with the Commission. Thus Bhaiji is of opinion that, whatever the national aspect of the question might have been, it was desirable for the Hindus to cooperate with the British Government in order to gain some communal advantages. This is obviously an anti-national attitude. Even from the narrow communal point of view it is difficult to see its wisdom, for communal advantages can only be given at the expense of another community, and when both seek the favours of the ruling power, there is little chance of obtaining even a superficial advantage.

Bhaiji's argument, repeatedly stated, is that the British Government is so strongly entrenched in India that it cannot be shaken by any popular movement and therefore it is folly to try to do so. The only alternative is to seek its favours. That is an argument which I can only characterise, with all respect to him, as wholly unworthy of any people however fallen they might be.

Bhaiji's view is that the cry of Hindu-Muslim unity is a false cry and a wrong ideal to aim at because the power of gift is in the hands of the government. Granting this power of gift, every cry other than one of seeking the government's favours is futile. And if the possibility



of Hindu-Muslim cooperation and collaboration is ruled out,<sup>3</sup> nationalism is also ruled out in the country-wide sense of the word. The inevitable consequence, and Bhaiji accepts this, is what he calls "Hindu nationalism", which is but another name for Hindu communalism. What is the way to this? Cooperation with British imperialism. "I feel an impulse within me," says Bhaiji in his presidential address, "that the Hindus would willingly cooperate with Great Britain if their status and responsible position as the premier community in India is recognised in the political institutions of new India."

This attitude of trying to combine with the ruling power against another community or group is the natural and only policy which communalism can adopt. It fits in of course entirely with the wishes of the ruling power which can then play off one group against another. It was the policy which was adopted by the Muslim communalists with some apparent temporary advantages to themselves. It is the policy which the Hindu Mahasabha partly favoured from its earliest days but could not adopt whole-heartedly because of the pressure of nationalist Hindus, and which its leaders now seem to have definitely adopted.

Dr. Moonje, presiding over the C.P. Hindu Conference on May 17, 1933 made it clear that "the Mahasabha never had any faith in the kind of noncooperation which Mahatma Gandhi has been preaching and practising. It believes in the eternal *Sanatan* Law of stimulus and response, namely, responsive cooperation. The Mahasabha holds that whatever may be the constitution of the legislatures, they should never be boycotted." Dr. Moonje is an authority on *Sanatan* Law, but I hope it does not lay down that the response to a kick should be grovelling at the feet of him who kicks. This speech was made when a wide-spread national struggle was going on and there was unprecedented repression under the ordinance regime. I shall not discuss here the wisdom of stating, long before the British-made constitution had taken shape, that whatever happens they would work it. Was this not an invitation to the government to ignore the Mahasabha for in any event it would accept the new dispensation?

Dr. Moonje himself went to the Round Table Conference in 1930, at the height of the civil disobedience movement, though in justice to him it must be stated that he had declared that he went in his

3. Bhai Parmanand stated that "we have reached a stage when the Congress with its theory of Swaraj through Hindu-Muslim unity and civil disobedience goes entirely out of the field."



individual capacity. Subsequently of course the Mahasabha took full part in the London conferences and committees.

Of the part taken by the Mahasabha representatives in these deliberations, especially by those from the Punjab and Sind, I wish only to say that it was a most painful one. Politically it was most reactionary and efforts were made to increase the reserved powers and safeguards of the British Government or the Governors in order to prevent the Muslim majorities in certain provinces from exercising effective power. The identical policy and argument of the Muslim communalists in regard to the whole of India were repeated by Hindu communalists in regard to certain provinces. But of course the special powers of Governors were not going to be confined to some provinces. They would inevitably apply to all the provinces. The reason for this reactionary attitude in both the cases was of course fear of the majority. Whatever the reason, this played entirely into the hands of the British Government.

The whole of the case of the Sind Hindu Sabha is a negation of the principle of democracy,<sup>4</sup> except in so far as joint electorates are demanded. It is an attempt to prevent the will of the majority from prevailing because the minority might suffer. The anti-social arguments of greater wealth and education of the minority are advanced, and financial reasons based entirely on the continuation of the top-heavy British system are made a prop. Wealth and economic control are not only sufficient protection under modern conditions, but have to be protected against. Almost every argument that has been advanced by the Sind Hindu communalists can be advanced by the Muslim minority in India as a whole with this difference that the Hindus are generally the richer and more educated community and have thus greater economic power.

In their attempts to show the backwardness of the Muslims in Sind, the Sind Hindu Sabha memorandum to the Joint Parliamentary Committee has made sweeping statements about Muslims which are astonishing and most painful to read.<sup>5</sup> They remind one of Katherine Mayo's methods of denunciation.

I do not know what the Punjab Hindu Sewak Sabha is. Probably it is not connected with the Hindu Sabha, and it may only be a

4. Its contention was that Sind, whose connection with Bombay had proved beneficial, was now being made over to a Council "dominated by a... medieval oligarchy."

5. The memorandum of 17 July 1933 stated that "the organised gang dacoities in the Sukkur district show that the Sind Muslims continue to be almost as intolerant as they were in the forties of the last century."

mushroom growth fathered by our benign government. On the eve of Bhai Parmanand's departure for England last May, to give evidence before the Joint Committee, this Sabha sent him a message which laid stress on the retention of safeguards by Governors in order to protect the Hindus of the Punjab. "The only thing," it said, "that can protect the Punjab Hindus is the effective working of safeguards as provided in the constitution." "Let not any endeavours of the politicians lead to the abrogation of these safeguards.... The judicious discharge of their special responsibility by our Governors has been greatly helpful."

Another organization, of which I know nothing, the Punjab Hindu Youth League of Lahore, stated as follows in a public statement dated May 29, 1933: "We feel that the time has now come for unity not so much between Moslems and Hindus as between the British and Indians ...Hindu leaders...should insist on having safeguards for the Hindu minority in the constitutions and cabinets."

I cannot hold the Mahasabha responsible for these statements but as a matter of fact they fit in with, and are only a slight elaboration of the Mahasabha attitude. And they bear out that many Hindu communalists are definitely thinking on the lines of cooperation with British imperialism in the hope of getting favours. It requires little argument to show that this attitude is not only narrowly communal but also anti-national and intensely reactionary. If this is the attitude when the Hindu Mahasabha feels that it has lost all along the line, in so far as the Communal Award is concerned, one wonders what its attitude will be when a petty favour is shown to it by the government.

It is perfectly true that the Hindu Mahasabha has stood for joint electorates right through its career and this is obviously the only national solution of the problem. It is also true that the Communal Award is an utter negation of nationalism and is meant to separate India into communal compartments and give strength to disruptive tendencies and thus to strengthen the hold of British imperialism. But it must be borne in mind that nationalism cannot be accepted only when it profits the majority community. The test comes in the provinces where there is a Muslim majority and in that test the Hindu Mahasabha has failed.

Nor is it enough to blame Muslim communalists. It is easy enough to do so, for Indian Muslims as a whole are unhappily very backward and compare unfavourably with Muslims in all other countries. The point is that a special responsibility does attach to the Hindus in India both because they are the majority community and because economically and educationally they are more advanced. The Mahasabha, instead of discharging that responsibility has acted in a manner which



has undoubtedly increased the communalism of the Muslims and made them distrust the Hindus all the more. The only way it has tried to meet their communalism is by its own variety of communalism. One communalism does not end the other; each feeds on the other and both fatten.

The Mahasabha at Ajmer has passed a long resolution on the Communal Award pointing out its obvious faults and inconsistencies.<sup>6</sup> But it has not, so far as I am aware, said a word in criticism of the White Paper scheme. I am not personally interested in petty criticisms of that scheme because I think that it is wholly bad and is incapable of improvement. But from the Mahasabha's point of view to ignore it was to demonstrate that it cared little, if at all, about the political aspect of Indian freedom. It thought only in terms of what the Hindus got or did not get. It has been reported that a resolution on independence was brought forward but this was apparently suppressed. Not only that, no resolution on the political or economic objective was considered. If the Mahasabha claims to represent the Hindus of India, must it be said that the Hindus are not interested in the freedom of India?

Ordinarily this would be remarkable enough. But in present-day conditions and with the background of the past few years of heroic struggle and sacrifice, such a lapse can have only one meaning—that the Mahasabha has ceased to think even in terms of nationalism and is engrossed in communal squabbles. Or it may be that the policy is a deliberate one so as to avoid irritating the government with which the Mahasabha wishes to cooperate.

This view is strengthened by the fact that no reference is made in the resolutions or in the presidential address to the ordinance rule and the extraordinary measures of repression which the government has indulged in and is still indulging in. The Mahasabha seems to live in a world of its own unconnected with the struggles and desires and sufferings of the Indian people.

Even more significant was the refusal (if newspaper reports are to be credited) to pass a resolution of condolence on the death, under tragic circumstances, of Syt. J.M. Sen Gupta.<sup>7</sup> This was a harmless resolution, a formal tribute to the memory of a great patriot and a Hindu, and yet the Mahasabha sensed danger in it.

Our friends, the moderates or liberals, though they may be lacking in action and though their methods and ideology may be utterly

6. The resolution pointed out that even the Hindus of the minority provinces were opposed, in principle, to communal electorates.

7. The president disallowed it on the ground that it was not proposed in the subjects committee.



inadequate, still consider these questions and pass resolutions on them. Not so the Mahasabha which has moved away completely from the political and national plane and rests itself solely on the communal issue, thereby weakening even its communal position. I submit that this attitude is wholly reactionary and anti-national. I have some contacts with the outside world, through foreign newspapers and other means, and I should like to tell the Mahasabha leaders that, whatever their motives or methods may have been, they have succeeded in creating a considerable amount of prejudice abroad against the Mahasabha and the communally inclined Hindus.

I cannot say what following the Hindu or Muslim communal organizations have. It is possible that in a moment of communal excitement each side may command the allegiance of considerable numbers. But I do submit that on both sides these organisations represent the rich upper class groups and the struggle for communal advantages is really an attempt of these groups to take as big a share of power and privilege for themselves as possible. At the most it means jobs for a few of our unemployed intellectuals. How do these communal demands meet the needs of the masses? What is the programme of the Hindu Mahasabha or the Muslim League for the workers, the peasants, and the lower middle classes, which form the great bulk of the nation? They have no programme except a negative one, as the Mahasabha hinted at Ajmer, of not disturbing the present social order. This in itself shows that the controlling forces of these communal organizations are the upper class, possessing social groups today. The Muslim communalists tell us a great deal about the democracy of Islam but are afraid of democracy in practice; the Hindu communalists talk of nationalism and think in terms of a 'Hindu nationalism'.

Personally I am convinced that nationalism can only come out of the ideological fusion of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and other groups in India. That does not and need not mean the extinction of any real culture of any group, but it does mean a common national outlook, to which other matters are subordinated. I do not think that Hindu-Muslim or other unity will come merely by reciting it like a *mantra*. That it will come, I have no doubt, but it will come from below, not above, for many of those above are too much interested in English domination, and hope to preserve their special privileges through it. Social and economic forces will inevitably bring other problems to the front. They will create cleavages along different lines, but the communal cleavage will go.

I have been warned by friends, whose opinion I value, that my attitude towards communal organizations will result in antagonizing



many people against me. That is indeed probable. I have no desire to antagonize any countryman of mine for we are in the midst of a mighty struggle against a powerful opponent. But that very struggle demands that we must check harmful tendencies and always keep the goal before us. I would be false to myself, to my friends and comrades, so many of whom have sacrificed their all at the altar of freedom, and even to those who disapprove of what I say, if I remained a silent witness to an attempt to weaken and check our great struggle for freedom. Those who, in my opinion, are helping in this attempt, may be perfectly honest in the beliefs they hold. I do not challenge their *bona fides*. But none the less the beliefs may be wrong, anti-national and reactionary.

I write as an individual, and, in this matter, I claim to represent no one but myself. Many may agree with me; I hope they do. But whether they do so or not, I must say frankly what I have in my mind. That is not perhaps the way of politicians for in politics people are very careful of what they say and do not say lest they offend some group or individual and lose support. But I am not a politician by choice; forces stronger than me have driven me to this field and, it may be, that I have yet to learn the ways of politicians.

## 81. To Mridula Sarabhai<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
December 1, 1933

My dear Mridula,

I received your telegrams about the statement made by Bhai Parmanand at Ahmedabad. I do not think it is worthwhile for you to take any trouble over the matter. It does not make much difference what personal accusations are brought against me about my courage and cowardice. I gather that Gauri Shankar Misra, the bright secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha, has even charged me with the murder of the girl. This is delightful.

I had a letter from Bhai Parmanand on the subject in answer to my letter and telegram. Thereupon I wrote to him giving him the facts. I am sending you copies of this correspondence. I am also sending this correspondence to some members of the Ahmedabad Youth League

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

(Anandi Thakore etc.) who have written to me on the subject and asked me for the facts. I have given them permission to publish this correspondence if they so wish it. You can also make any use of it that you desire.

Yours etc.,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

**82. To S. A. Brelvi<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
December 3, 1933

My dear Brelvi,

Thanks for your letter.<sup>2</sup> I am now receiving the *Chronicle*.

I am going to Jubbulpore tomorrow. I do not think there is much chance of my going to Bombay in the near future. But one never knows.

As regards the communal issue it is true that I have not said much about it in the past though I have made frequent brief references to it. This was not because I wanted to ignore it but because I felt that mere talk of Hindu-Muslim unity in the air was rather pointless. What was far more important was the positive side of our struggle, political and economic, as this would necessarily divert public attention. Now that there is a lull in the political activities the position is somewhat changed and I felt compelled to come out strongly. People accuse me of using strong language but one has to be vehement to force public opinion on an issue. Milk and water utterances full of noble sentiments and piety do not carry one very far. I think I have succeeded, at any rate, in drawing attention to the growing danger. I have felt also in the past that attempts to bring about superficial pacts and compromises could be of little help. Under the present circumstances, I think, it is even more difficult to succeed in this way. Therefore, I would not be eager to encourage such an attempt. But certainly the time has come, if it was not long overdue, to attack communalism root and branch. I think the right line to take is that communalism is merely a cover for political reaction.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. In his letter of 29 November 1933, he congratulated Jawaharlal on his stand on the communal question.



Bhai Parmanand's rejoinder to my long statement seems to me to be particularly feeble.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### 83. A Reply To Sir Mohammad Iqbal<sup>1</sup>

11-12-33

I have read with care the frank and courteous statement that Sir Mohammad Iqbal has issued to the press<sup>2</sup> and I gladly accept his invitation to answer the question he has formulated. But first I must refer to the incident during the communal negotiations at the second Round Table Conference, which has been mentioned by Sir Mohammad. I am obviously not in a position to say anything about it from my own knowledge, and others, who are in a better position, will no doubt clear up any misapprehensions that may have arisen. But when Sir Mohammad refers to any condition laid down by Gandhiji as an "inhuman condition", I am quite sure that he is under a serious misapprehension.

Sir Mohammad says that Gandhiji was prepared to accept, in his personal capacity, the demands of the Muslim delegates to the Round Table Conference, but that he could not guarantee the acceptance of his position by the Congress. It seems to me obvious that Gandhiji, or any one else in his position, could not possibly adopt any other course. No representative of a democratic organization could do so. Even the Working Committee of the Congress could not go behind the Congress resolution; it could only refer the question to the All India Congress Committee or the open session of the Congress which is the final authority. Quite apart from the general Congress attitude, it was

1. Statement to the press, 11 December 1933. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 14 December 1933. Reprinted in *Recent Essays and Writings*, (Allahabad, 1934), pp. 62-71.

2. In a statement issued on 6 December 1933, Iqbal contended that the Aga Khan had offered Mahatma Gandhi Muslim cooperation if the Congress agreed to accept the Muslim demands and regarded Mahatma Gandhi's condition that the Muslims should not support the claims of the depressed classes as "inhuman".

well known that a considerable section of Muslim opinion in India, the Muslim nationalists, were opposed to some of those demands. Gandhiji had repeatedly stated in India, prior to his departure for England, that he would accept the decision of Dr. M.A. Ansari as representing the Muslim nationalists, on this question. He had further stated that if the two Muslim groups could arrive at an agreement, he would unhesitatingly accept it. In order to facilitate this he had pressed hard for the inclusion of Dr. Ansari's name among the delegates to the Round Table Conference, but this repeated request was apparently strenuously opposed by the Muslim delegates in London. In spite of all this and as a last effort to bring about some agreement, Gandhiji went to the length of committing himself personally. It is obvious that although he could not bind the Congress, his comment and pleadings would have gone a tremendous way in converting the Congress.

The second condition said to have been laid down by Gandhiji was that Muslim delegates should not support the special claims of the depressed classes. This, according to Sir Mohammad, was "an inhuman condition" as it meant that the depressed classes should continue to be kept down. This is an extraordinary conclusion. If there is one thing more than any other that Gandhiji has stood for and stands for today, it is that the depressed classes should cease to be depressed or exploited or handicapped in any way, and that they should be on a perfect level with every other group. It was because he felt that if they were placed in a separate compartment by themselves they would have a stigma attached to them and fusion with others would become more difficult, that he opposed their separation. It is well known that a certain alliance was formed in London during the second Round Table Conference between the delegates of some minority groups and British Conservatives. Gandhiji evidently wanted the Muslim delegates not to support the demand for the separation of the depressed classes into a distinct group. So far as I know, he has never opposed the grant of special and additional representation to the depressed classes. Indeed, he holds that every facility must be given them to advance and catch up to the more advanced groups and communities. Subsequent events have demonstrated how far he is prepared to go in this direction. Socialist as I am, I fail to see any flaw or any impropriety in this reasoning.

Sir Mohammad evidently suspects a sinister design on Gandhiji's part. He hints that what Gandhiji is after is not so much the raising of the depressed classes, but the prevention of their fusion with the other communities, especially, I suppose, the Muslims in India. It is



difficult to meet a suspicion and a prejudice which has little reason behind it, but anyone who knows Gandhiji at all will consider the suggestion that he is working for the Harijan movement with a political motive as absurd. Personally, I am not interested in religious labels and I am sure that they will soon disappear, or, at any rate, cease to have any political significance. Sir Mohammad evidently still attaches political significance to them. Gandhiji, to my knowledge, does not, but he is certainly a man of religion and he believes in the essentials of the Hindu faith. He wants to restore these essentials and to sweep away the accretions. It is because he feels that untouchability is a degrading and a disgusting accretion that he fights against it. It is quite wrong to say that he does not want a fusion between the depressed classes and caste Hindus. Indeed he wants this as well as a fusion between both of these and the other communities in India. But, like Sir Mohammad, he is enamoured of certain basic essentials of culture and he wants to preserve these and at the same time to give perfect freedom to other cultural forms.

Personally my outlook is different. It is not religious and I find it difficult to think of groups in terms of religion. Sir Mohammad evidently does so to the exclusion of other and more modern ways of thinking, and I am afraid he confuses religion with race and culture. Perhaps it is because of this that he advances a biological argument which I entirely fail to understand. Having condemned Gandhiji for a fancied attempt to prevent the fusion of the depressed classes with other communities he says that in his opinion a fusion of the different communities in India is a chimerical notion and the sooner the idea is given up the better.

The question whether biological fusion of different groups in India is going to take place or not raises a host of issues and is chiefly interesting from the point of view of eugenics and culture. It is not, directly, a political question and present interest in it can only be academic. I think that it is inevitable that we should go towards such fusion but I cannot say when it is likely to become an accomplished fact.

But what has this got to do with the communal issue? Are Muslims or Sikhs or Indian Christians, as religious groups, biologically different from the Hindus as a group? Are we different species of animals or of *homo sapiens*? There are racial and cultural differences in India but these differences have nothing to do with the religious divisions; they cut athwart the lines of religious cleavage. If a person is converted to another religion he does not change his biological make-up or his racial characteristics or to any great extent his cultural background. Cultural types are national, not religious, and modern conditions are helping in



the development of an international type. Even in past times various cultures influenced each other and produced mixed types but, as a rule, the national type dominated. This has certainly been so in countries with an ancient culture, like India, Persia and China.

What is Muslim culture? Is it the Semitic Arabian culture or the Aryan Persian culture or is it a mixture of the two? Arabian culture, after a period of glory, receded into the background, but even at the height of its triumph it was powerfully influenced by Persian culture. It had little, if any, influence on India. Persian culture is essentially pre-Islamic, and one of the remarkable lessons of history is the persistence, for thousands of years, of this old Iranian culture and tradition. Even today Persia is looking back to the pre-Islamic times for her cultural inspiration. This Persian culture certainly influenced India and was influenced by her. But even so the Indian culture dominated in India and stamped its impress on the outsiders who came to her.

Today in India there is absolutely no cultural or racial difference between the Muslim and Hindu masses. Even the handful of upper class Muslims in north India, who perhaps think themselves apart from the rest of the country, bear the impress of India on them all over the place and are only superficially Persianized. Would any of them be more at home or more in harmony with their surroundings in Persia or Arabia or Turkey or any other Islamic country?

As a matter of fact this question has only a historical and academic interest because modern industrial conditions and rapid transport and frequent intercourse between different peoples are resulting in developing an international type of culture and obliterating to a large extent national and cultural boundaries. Does Sir Mohammad Iqbal approve of what is taking place in Central Asia, Turkey, Egypt and Persia? Or does he think that Indian Muslims will remain immune from the forces that are shaping and reforming Islamic countries? Whether he approves or not, world forces will continue to act breaking up the old and out of date and building up the new. Personally I welcome this process, though I have no desire to see the world standardized and made after a single pattern. I should like to have the different world cultures keep their rich inheritance and at the same time to adapt themselves to changing conditions.

So far as India is concerned, not only do I believe that a unitary Indian nation is possible but that, fundamentally and culturally, it exists in spite of numerous superficial differences. The present communal problem is entirely a political creation of upper class groups in the various communities and has no relation to racial or cultural matters or the basic needs of the masses.



I now come to Sir Mohammad's 'straight question'<sup>3</sup> to me. There is a great difference in his outlook and mine and I am unable to think in terms of religious majorities or minorities. It is possible, therefore, that we may talk round each other and use words and phrases in different senses. But for the present I shall try to use these words in Sir Mohammad's sense.

I am not prepared to leave the decision of any vital matter affecting India or the Indian people to any outside authority, and certainly not to the imperialist power that governs us and exploits our weaknesses and differences. I agree that the majority community should 'concede the minimum safeguards necessary for the protection of a minority'. But what are these minimum safeguards and who is to decide them? The minority itself? As a general rule I am prepared to agree to this also, though there may be exceptions where vital matters affecting the nation are concerned. We may, for the present, rule out these exceptions. How then are we to know what the minority community really desires? Are we to take the opinion of any small group claiming to represent the community? And when there are several such groups, what are we to do? Neither the Muslim League nor the Muslim Conference can claim to be a democratic or representative body and a considerable number of Muslims are opposed to their demands. The council of the Muslim League—apparently the council exists in the air and there is no other body behind it—is a more or less permanent, self-electing or nominating body. The Muslim Conference is dominated, by its very constitution, by the Muslim members of the official legislatures. How can these bodies claim to represent the Muslims generally in India and, more specially, the Muslim masses? They may occasionally give expression to a prevailing sentiment. Then again are we to consider a group of persons, chosen by the ruling imperialist power for the Round Table Conference, as representatives of the Muslim masses? They may be estimable persons, but they certainly have no representative capacity.

The only way to find out the wishes of the Muslims of India is to consult them and the democratic method is for them to elect representatives for the purpose on as wide a franchise as possible, preferably adult franchise. I am perfectly prepared to abide by any decision of theirs so arrived at.

3. Iqbal asked Jawaharlal how India's problem could be solved if the majority community was prepared neither to make concessions nor to accept the award of a third party. Iqbal thought that there were only two alternatives, either to allow British imperialism to continue permanently or to redistribute India on the basis of religious, historical and cultural affinities.



I should like Sir Mohammad Iqbal to consider his fourteen points which are supposed to provide the minimum safeguards necessary for the protection of the Muslims, and to spot anything in them which benefits or raises up the Muslim masses. As he knows, my chief interest in politics is the raising of the masses and the removal of barriers of class and wealth and the equalization of society. This point of view was apparently never considered by the framers and advocates of the fourteen points. It is natural that I should not feel enthusiastic about them. But if the Muslims declare for them in the democratic way I have suggested, I shall accept these demands and I am quite sure that they would be accepted by the nation as a whole. I imagine, however, that when the Muslim masses are consulted they will lay far more stress on economic demands which affect them as well as the non-Muslim masses intimately rather than on such demands as interest a handful of upper class people.

The political problem of India can only be decided by the Indian people themselves without the intervention of an outside authority, so also the communal problem. And the only way to proceed in regard to both of these is to go to the people themselves. A constituent assembly elected on an adult or near-adult franchise alone can decide the political issue. I am personally prepared to have elections for this assembly by separate electorates for those minorities who so desire it. The representatives of these minorities, so elected, will have every right to speak for them and no one can say that the majority community has influenced their election. Let these people consider the communal question and, as I have stated above, I shall accept the demand put forward by the Muslim representatives.

Sir Mohammad will observe that I am placing before him a democratic and feasible solution of the problem and I am even keeping the Congress out of it. I am sure the Congress will gladly efface itself if this solution is put forward.

My answer to Sir Mohammad Iqbal's question therefore is this. I do not think that these are the only two alternatives he mentions. There are many other avenues. In any event he ought to know full well, that if any community, majority or minority, seeks an alliance with imperialism, it will have to face the unrelenting and continuous opposition and hostility of Indian nationalism. As a matter of fact, no community or minority can do so. Only a few leaders and upper class people may do so, for every community as a whole suffers from it. The masses can never compromise with imperialism for their only hope lies in freedom from its shackles.

Nor do I believe in the religious redistribution of India. Such divisions are most undesirable and cannot take place in the modern world. But



I am not against redistribution or reshaping of different provinces which will give different cultural groups the fullest opportunity for self-development.

#### 84. Statement to the Press<sup>1</sup>

I am glad Sir Mohammad Yakub<sup>2</sup> has appreciated the suggestion made by me in my reply to Sir Mohammad Iqbal about a decision on the political and communal problems by means of a constituent assembly. But he is labouring under a misapprehension if he thinks that the present and intended legislatures can take the place of a constituent assembly. That is far from my meaning, and I do not think these legislatures can be really representative of any section of opinion.

The ideas underlying a constituent assembly are (1) full self-determination by the people of India without the imposition of the will of any outside authority and (2) decision by the mass of people through their representatives elected on adult franchise.

To facilitate a decision on the communal problem and remove all suspicion from the minds of minorities, I have suggested that such minorities as desire it might elect their representatives through separate electorates.

The only business of the constituent assembly will be to draw up a constitution and then dissolve itself, new elections taking place under the new constitution so drawn up.

It is clear that the White Paper and the Round Table Conference schemes have nothing to do with all this, and they must be ignored till the time comes for a constituent assembly to be summoned. The struggle for freedom of the Indian people which is being carried on by the Congress will continue till then.

1. Allahabad, 16 December 1933. *The Hindu*, 17 December 1933.

2. (1879-1942); president, U.P. Muslim League, 1926; member, Legislative Assembly, 1924-38.

**85. Reality and Myth<sup>1</sup>**

The suggestion made by me that both political and communal problems in India should be solved by means of a constituent assembly has met with considerable favour. Gandhiji has commended it and so have many others. Others again have misunderstood it or not taken the trouble to understand it.

Politically and nationally, if it is granted, as it must be, that the people of India are to be the sole arbiters of India's fate and must therefore have full freedom to draw up their constitution, it follows that this can only be done by means of a constituent assembly elected on the widest franchise. Those who believe in independence have no other choice. Even those who talk vaguely in terms of a nebulous Dominion Status must agree that the decision has to be made by the Indian people. How then is this decision to be made? Not by a group of so-called leaders or individuals. Not by these self-constituted bodies called All Parties Conferences which represent, if any body at all, small interested groups and leave out the vast majority of the population. Not even, let us admit, by the National Congress, powerful and largely representative as it is. It is of course open to the Congress to influence and largely control the constituent assembly if it can carry the people with it. But the ultimate political decision must be with the people of India acting through a popularly elected constituent assembly.

This assembly of course can have nothing in common with the sham and lifeless councils and assemblies imposed on us by an alien authority. It must derive its sanction from the people themselves without any outside interference. I have suggested that it should be elected under adult or near-adult franchise. What the method of election should be can be considered and decided later. Personally I favour the introduction, as far as possible, of the functional system of election as this is far more representative of real interests. The geographical system often covers up and confuses these interests. But I am prepared to agree to either or to a combination of both. I see no difficulty, except one, and that is an important one, in the way of such a constituent assembly being

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 5 January 1934. *The Tribune*, 8 January 1934. Reprinted in *Recent Essays and Writings*, (Allahabad, 1934), pp. 72-81.



elected and functioning. This functioning will be limited to drawing up of a constitution and then fresh elections will have to be held on the basis of the new constitution.

The one difficulty I referred to is the presence and dominance of an outside authority, that is the British Government. It is clear that so long as this dominance continues no real constituent assembly can meet or function. So thus an essential preliminary is the development of sufficient strength in the nation to be able to enforce the will of the Indian people. Two opposing wills cannot prevail at the same time; there must be conflict between them and a struggle for dominance, such as we see today in India. Essentially, this struggle is for the preservation of British vested interests in India and the White Paper effort is an attempt to perpetuate them. No constituent assembly can be bound down by these chains, and so long as the nation has not developed strength enough to break these chains, such an assembly cannot function.

This assembly would also deal with the communal problem, and I have suggested that, in order to remove all suspicion from the minds of a minority, it may even, if it so chooses, have its representatives elected by separate electorates. These separate electorates would only be for the constituent assembly. The future method of election, as well as all other matters connected with the constitution, would be settled by the assembly itself.

I have further added that if the Muslim elected representatives for this constituent assembly adhere to certain communal demands I shall press for their acceptance. Much as I dislike communalism I realise that it does not disappear by suppression but by a removal of the feeling of fear, or by a diversion of interest. We should therefore remove this fear complex and make the Muslim masses realise that they can have any protection that they really desire. I feel that this realisation will go a long way in toning down the feeling of communalism.

But I am convinced that the real remedy lies in a diversion of interest from the myths that have been fostered and have grown up round the communal question to the realities of today. The bulwark of communalism today is political reaction and so we find that communal leaders inevitably tend to become reactionaries in political and economic matters. Groups of upper class people try to cover up their own class interests by making it appear that they stand for the communal demands of religious minorities or majorities. A critical examination of the various communal demands put forward on behalf of Hindus, Muslims or others reveals that they have nothing to do with the masses. At the most they deal with some jobs for a few of the unemployed intellectuals but it is



obvious that the problem even of the unemployed middle class intellectuals cannot be solved by a redistribution of state jobs. There are far too many unemployed persons of the middle class to be absorbed in state or other services and their number is growing at a rapid pace. So far as the masses are concerned there is absolutely no reference to them or to their wants in the numerous demands put forward by communal organisations. Apparently the communalists do not consider them as worthy of attention. What is there, in the various communal formulae, in regard to the distress of the agriculturists, their rent or revenue or the staggering burden of debt that crushes them? Or in regard to the factory or railway or other workers who have to face continuous cuts in wages and a vanishing standard of living? Or the lower middle classes who, for want of employment and work, are sinking in the slough of despair? Heated arguments take place about seats in councils and separate and joint electorates and the separation of provinces which can affect or interest only a few. Is the starving peasant likely to be interested in this when hunger gnaws his stomach? But our communal friends take good care to avoid these real issues, for a solution of them might affect their own interests, and they try to divert people's attention to entirely unreal and, from the mass point of view, trivial matters.

Communalism is essentially a hunt for favours from a third party—the ruling power. The communalist can only think in terms of a continuation of foreign domination and he tries to make the best of it for his own particular group. Delete the foreign power and the communal arguments and demands fall to the ground. Both the foreign power and the communalists, as representing some upper class groups, want no essential change of the political and economic structure; both are interested in the preservation and augmentation of their vested interests. Because of this, both cannot tackle the real economic problems which confront the country for a solution of these would upset the present social structure and devalue the vested interests. For both, this ostrich-like policy of ignoring real issues is bound to end in disaster. Facts and economic forces are more powerful than governments and empires and can only be ignored at peril.

Communalism thus becomes another name for political and social reaction and the British Government, being the citadel of this reaction in India, naturally throws its sheltering wings over a useful ally. Many a false trail is drawn to confuse the issue; we are told of Islamic culture and Hindu culture, of religion and old custom, of ancient glories and the like. But behind all this lies political and social reaction, and communalism must therefore be fought on all fronts and given no quarter. Because the inward nature of communalism has not been sufficiently



realised, it has often sailed under false colours and taken in many an unwary person. It is an undoubted fact that many a Congressman has almost unconsciously partly succumbed to it and tried to reconcile his nationalism with this narrow and reactionary creed. A real appreciation of its true nature would demonstrate that there can be no common ground between the two. They belong to different species. It is time that Congressmen and others who have flirted with Hindu or Muslim or Sikh or any other communalism should understand this position and make their choice. No one can have it both ways, and the choice lies between political and social progress and stark reaction. An association with any form of communalism means the strengthening of the forces of reaction and of British imperialism in India; it means opposition to social and economic changes and a toleration of the present terrible distress of our people; it means a blind ignoring of world forces and events.

What are communal organisations? They are not religious although they confine themselves to religious groups and exploit the name of religion. They are not cultural and have done nothing for culture although they talk bravely of a past culture. They are not ethical or moral groups for their teachings are singularly devoid of all ethics and morality. They are certainly not economic groupings for there is no economic link binding their members and they have no shadow of an economic programme. Some of them claim not to be political even. What then are they?

As a matter of fact they function politically and their demands are political, but calling themselves non-political, they avoid the real issues and only succeed in obstructing the path of others. If they are political organisations then we are entitled to know, exactly where they stand. Do they stand for the complete freedom of India or a partial freedom, if such a thing exists? Do they stand for independence or what is called Dominion Status? The best of words are apt to be misleading and many people still think that Dominion Status is something next door to independence. As a matter of fact they are two different types entirely, two roads going in opposite directions. It is not a question of fourteen annas and sixteen annas but of different species of coins which are not interchangeable.

Dominion Status means continuing the steel framework of British finance and vested interests; from this stranglehold there is no relief under Dominion Status. Independence means a possibility of relief from these burdens and the freedom to decide about our social structure. Therefore whatever measure of limited freedom we may get under Dominion Status it will always be subject to the paramount claims of the



Bank of England and British capital, and it will also be subject to the continuation of our present economic structure. That means that we cannot solve our economic problems and relieve the masses of their crushing burdens; we can only sink deeper and deeper into the morass. What then do the communal organizations stand for: independence or Dominion Status?

We need not refer to that travesty of a constitution which the White Paper is supposed to embody. It is only an ungentle reminder to us that British capital and interests in India will be preserved at all costs, so long as the British Government has power to preserve them. Only those who are interested in the preservation of these British vested interests or those who are very simple and unsophisticated can go anywhere near the White Paper or its offshoots.

Even more important than the political objective is the economic objective. It is notorious that the era of politics has passed away and we live in an age when economics dominate national and international affairs. What have the communal organizations to say in regard to these economic matters? Or are they blissfully ignorant of the hunger and unemployment that darken the horizon of the masses as well as of the lower middle classes? If they claim to represent the masses they must know that the all-absorbing problem before these unfortunate and unhappy millions is the problem of hunger, and they should have some answer, some theoretical solution at least for this problem. What do they propose should be done in industry and in agriculture? How do they solve the distress of the worker and the peasant; what land laws do they suggest? What is to happen to the debt of the agricultural classes; is it to be liquidated or merely toned down, or is it to remain? What of unemployment? Do they believe in the present capitalist order of society or do they think in terms of a new order? These are a few odd questions that arise and an answer to them, as well as to other similar questions, will enlighten us as to the true inwardness of the claims and demands of the communalists. Even more so I think will the masses be enlightened if the answers manage to reach them. The Muslim masses are probably even poorer than the Hindu masses but the 'fourteen points' say nothing about these poverty-stricken Muslims. The Hindu communalists also lay all their stress on the preservation of their own vested interests and ignore their own masses.

I am afraid I am not likely to get clear, or perhaps any answers to my questions, partly because the questions are inconvenient, partly because communal leaders know little about economic facts and have never thought in terms of the masses. They are experts only in percentages and their battle ground is the conference room, not the field or factory



or market place. But whether they like them or not the questions will force themselves to the front and those who cannot answer them effectively will find little place for themselves in public affairs. The answer of many of us can be given in one comprehensive word—socialism—and in the socialist structure of society.

But whether socialism or communism is the right answer or some other, one thing is certain—that the answer must be in terms of economics and not merely politics. For India and the world are oppressed by economic problems and there is no escaping them. So long as the fullest economic freedom does not come to us there can be no freedom whatever the political structure may be. Economic freedom must of course include political freedom. That is the reality today; all else is myth and delusion, and there is no greater myth than the communal myth.

To go back to the constituent assembly. If a really popular assembly met with freedom to face and decide the real issues, immediately these real economic problems would occupy attention. The so-called communal problem will fade into the background for the masses will be far more interested in filling their hungry stomachs than in questions of percentages. This assembly will release the vital forces in the country which are at present suppressed by our foreign rulers as well as by Indian vested interests. The lead will go to the masses and the masses, when free, though they may sometimes err, think in terms of reality and have no use for myths. The workers and the peasantry will dominate the situation, and their decisions, imperfect though they may be, will take us a long way to freedom. I cannot say what the constituent assembly will decide. But I have faith in the masses and am willing to abide by their decision. And I am sure that the communal problem will cease to exist when it is put to the hard test of real mass opinion. It has been a hothouse growth nurtured in the heated atmosphere of conference rooms and so-called All Parties Conferences. It will not find a solution in that artificial environment, but it will wilt and die in the fresh air and the sunlight.



## THE BIHAR EARTHQUAKE

### 86. Appeal for Relief<sup>1</sup>

The terrible earthquake catastrophe that has overwhelmed Bihar and stricken thousands of homes, has, for the moment, shaken and numbed us all.<sup>2</sup> Many of us of the Congress fold are engrossed in our struggle for freedom. But even so the call of the suffering and afflicted humanity must be attended to.

I hope Congressmen will give every help, personal service, money and material to those that have been rendered helpless. There must be hundreds or thousands of orphan children to be looked after. That should be the special province and privilege of our women.

As was done in Japan during the earthquake disaster, I hope each householder will offer at least temporary welcome to one or two orphan boys and girls. The burden of relief will naturally fall heavily on Bihar, but I hope other provinces will help her and gladly share it with her.

1. Statement to the press, Santiniketan, 19 January 1934. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 20 January 1934.
2. The earthquake in Bihar on 15 January 1934 damaged all buildings in an area of about 6000 square miles and caused considerable loss of life. Darbhanga, Champaran and Muzaffarpur were the worst hit.

### 87. A Report on Muzaffarpur<sup>1</sup>

Muzaffarpur was in ruins. Thousands of houses had collapsed and many that remained standing were cracked and dangerous of approach.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 24 January 1934. *The Tribune*, 27 January 1934. Jawaharlal visited Muzaffarpur on 22 January 1934.



The streets were full of bricks and debris. Many of the smaller lanes were wholly blocked by the fallen material and one had to mount up ten feet or more to cross it. The roads were full of cracks and fissures through which large quantities of sandy water had come out leaving a covering of sand behind. In one place the road had sunk several feet and a wide gaping chasm separated it from the rest of the road.

The surviving population was living in improvised shelters; most of them could hardly be called shelters as there was only a white sheet as a covering. There they lived with an utter lack of privacy and without the most elementary necessities, shivering in the cold and not daring to approach the tottering walls. Many of these encampments in the city were isolated islands, surrounded by debris and ruined houses, and difficult of access. Sanitation, in these inside areas especially, was most defective, and the fear of an epidemic breaking out was always present. The water supply was very scarce.

The debris still covered many corpses. I saw corpses being carried away for disposal. I saw also a corpse emerge as the debris was being removed to clear a lane. It was that of a young man. His arm was up, apparently to protect himself from a falling wall. But the attempt failed and the raised arm remained petrified in that position, in mute testimony of his desire to save himself from the approaching doom.

There was no escape for those who lived in the crowded quarters of the city with its narrow lanes, no escape especially for the womenfolk. If they rushed out in the lane, even there the falling walls buried them. Those who were buried and still lived, lived only to die a lingering and terribly painful death for no rescue came for days. A few, with an amazing persistence, were taken out three days after and survived.

One of the most painful and distressing aspects of a painful occurrence was the delay in beginning relief work. It was natural for the people concerned to be numbed by the shock. It was natural for the nerves of the district officials to give way to some extent. But nerves have to be controlled in emergencies, and when every hour is precious, every moment may mean life or death to many, a cool and clear head is necessary. There were apparently no such heads in Muzaffarpur when they were most needed. And so it happened that while Muzaffarpur lay in ruins and large numbers of men and women and children hovered between life and death, the world knew nothing about it. Not even Patna, a bare forty miles away, knew of it. Nor did any outsiders know of the worse fate of Monghyr or of Darbhanga or many other places. It took three days for the terrible news to leak out. The usual swift means of communication—the telegraph and the railway—had no doubt



failed, but these cities lay within a day's journey on foot of each other. Government collapsed during these three days as surely no other government of modern times has done. Mr. K.P. Jayaswal,<sup>2</sup> writing of Darbhanga, truly says that such a state of affairs was unthinkable under any modern government. The first step that the government should have taken was to facilitate telegraphic and other communications to relieve the anxiety of friends and relatives in other places, and immediately to organise rescue work. Instead of this the telegraph worked in the most leisurely way and no steps were taken to add to the staff. Telegrams were usually accepted but not sent for days.

It is only three or four days after the event that the government seem to have woken up from their torpor and realised the gravity of the disaster. After the Bihar Governor's flying tour of the affected areas, relief work was pushed on by official agencies.

When I reached Muzaffarpur I went straight to one of the camps of the refugees in the court compound. Immediately I was surrounded by many of these unhappy people who complained that they were being forced by the police to take down their huts and encamp elsewhere as the compound was needed for the military. Many huts had already been brought down. This struck me as a curious way of offering relief—to turn out these people unceremoniously and without helping them or making other arrangements. A reference was made to some of the district authorities present, whereupon the order was apparently varied and most of the people who had encamped there were allowed to remain.

I next visited the hospital nearby. It was carrying on its work in the open. There were, I was told, eighty to ninety indoor patients and 50 to 60 outdoor patients. These figures apply to the earthquake patients only. It seemed to me that these figures were very low, considering the magnitude of the disaster. And I found, subsequently, large numbers of injured people in the various shelters round about the city who were not receiving any or sufficient medical attention. The hospital staff was working at high pressure and it was apparent that they were in need of further help. In spite of this, however, I was informed that qualified doctors from outside were not officially welcomed in Muzaffarpur, nor were the local doctors encouraged in any way.

Both in regard to medical and other relief, I gathered the impression that the officials in charge disliked the idea of any activity that was not completely under them. A Marwari Relief Committee that

2. (1871-1937); historian and author of *Hindu Law and Hindu Polity*.



was doing good work complained of the difficulties they had faced from official red tape and discouragement.

This attitude, typical as it is of officialdom in India, was none the less completely out of place in the face of a great disaster calling for every effort, official and private. It had been made perfectly clear on behalf of non-official agencies that they were there to cooperate with official agencies, as far as possible, in the relief work. But it was also stated that they could not place themselves under the control and direction of the official agencies as this would make them as expensive, slow-moving and unresponsive to public needs as official agencies usually are. Non-official effort should be far more efficient and speedy, and should make the most of every rupee spent.

The present needs of the survivors of Muzaffarpur are food, clothing, blankets, good shelters against rain, and medical relief. At least one more hospital should be started in a big shed, and arrangements made for medical attendance in the various camps. Splints and first-aid materials are badly needed. Cases of delivery are taking place in these camps with no doctors in attendance. A thorough cleaning up of the areas surrounding the camps is urgently needed to prevent an epidemic. The lack of water is causing great distress as the old water supply has failed and the wells have become choked up with sand. The government is taking steps to open a number of tube-wells.

Something is now being done, both by official and non-official agencies, to relieve the survivors of Muzaffarpur. But the villages round about are sadly neglected. They suffer also from a lack of water and their fields are partly covered by the sand that came up when water gushed out from the fissures in the ground. The disaster is terrible enough but wild rumour makes it even worse. All manner of extraordinary stories are about. *The Pioneer* gave currency to an amazing tale of the Ganges drying up and playing various other tricks in Patna. No one in Patna, that I came across, had heard of this extraordinary occurrence.

Figures for casualties vary from a few thousands to tens of thousands. Official figures, as usual, err greatly on the one side, rumour errs on the other.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the truth lies between the two. It is obvious, however, that a very large number of people died as a result of this terrible visitation. And most of their bodies still lie buried under the ruins of the houses they once inhabited.

3. The official estimate was that 7,253 lost their lives.

**88. Appeal for Contributions<sup>1</sup>**

My visit to Muzaffarpur has convinced me—if further conviction was necessary—that help in the shape of money, blankets and clothes is most urgently required. Various official and non-official agencies are at work in organising relief and there is some danger of duplication and waste of effort although every attempt will undoubtedly be made for cooperation in the common task. Official agencies are heavy of movement, expensive and surrounded by red tape. They seldom reach fully or effectively the masses who are most affected. Therefore it is desirable for us to concentrate on the non-official agencies that are functioning and to send our help to them. These agencies are gradually consolidating themselves under the Central Relief Fund of which Babu Rajendra Prasad is the president, and many representative persons in Bihar the members. I earnestly appeal therefore for help to be sent direct to Babu Rajendra Prasad or to the Bihar Bank, Patna, for this Central Relief Fund. It is inadvisable for individuals and groups to attempt to carry relief directly to the areas affected. They should communicate first with the Central Relief Committee at Patna who will direct their efforts in the right direction. Above all, it should be remembered that delay defeats the object in view. Urgent and immediate help is wanted—blankets, old and new; clothes, used and unused; and, above all, money. First-aid appliances are also needed.

Bihar has been struck down by a terrible natural calamity. We in other provinces have escaped. A slight turn in fortune's wheel and we, of other cities and areas, might have had to face disaster and the loss of our loved ones. We have escaped but many of our brethren and sisters have been stricken down and call, in suffering and agony, to us, the fortunate ones, for help. The dead are beyond our reach, but the living and the maimed lie in the shadow of death and fight for life. Their strength fails them but their feeble cry has reached the hearts of India's millions. The call has been heard and all our strength and resources must go out in answer to it.

1. Statement to the press, 24 January 1934. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 28 January 1934.



## 89. Advice on Contributions<sup>1</sup>

Babu Rajendra Prasad writes to me that relief work is proceeding apace; but the problem is, of course, an enormous one. He says that blankets and clothes are not so much needed now as money for shelters and other work. It is therefore desirable not to pay much attention to the collection of clothes and blankets. And in no event should food-stuffs be sent. Some grain merchants of Allahabad have collected rice, dal and other food-stuffs and tried to send them to Patna. I have pointed out to them that this is a very wasteful method of giving relief as such articles can easily be purchased on the spot, and the freight, *thela* and other charges may even exceed the price of the food-stuffs sent. Such provisions when collected, should be sold and the money sent to Patna. All energies must therefore be concentrated on the collection of money.

Young men have come to me offering their personal services for relief work. Their idea of relief usually is to collect money and material and to distribute them in the affected areas. The work of distribution can obviously be done only by a select few and it is not possible to increase the number of workers of this kind indefinitely without a loss of efficiency. Babu Rajendra Prasad has also stated that he does not require workers from outside at present.

But may I commend to our eager young men a suggestion put forward by Sir Courtney Tyrell, the Chief Justice of the Patna High Court? He has suggested that small groups of young men, about six in number under a leader or foreman, should go armed with spades, shovels and baskets and help in clearing the debris. In this way, working as voluntary labourers, they could give valuable help to the poor and to persons of moderate means to recover their household goods, and sometimes even the bodies of their dear ones, from the debris and rubbish that cover them. This requires hard work but it is most useful work and profitable alike to the sufferers in the affected areas and to those who undertake it. Does the enthusiasm of our young men run to this kind of physical labour, or is it merely a clerky enthusiasm which looks to a desk?

1. Allahabad, 29 January 1934. *The Leader*, 31 January 1934.

## 90. The Organization of the Allahabad Relief Fund<sup>1</sup>

Many of our colleagues and members of our Earthquake Relief Committee who have been making collections for the Relief Fund have told me that all manner of groups and individuals are collecting money for relief in the city. Some of these groups are no doubt *bona fide* groups; about others we cannot say whom they represent and for whom they collect. It appears that quite a large number of communal, sectional and even caste groups are collecting money for their special funds. That is unfortunate enough but what is even sadder is the opportunity that this indiscriminate collection gives to unscrupulous individuals to exploit the earthquake disaster to their own personal advantage. If there could be anything that was non-communal and non-sectional it was the earthquake that struck down high and low and people of every community and religion and class and group. And if there is any form of activity that must be above communalism and party and sectionalism and petty group feeling, it is the relief work to lessen the suffering of the survivors. It is tragic to think and act in our narrow groups in the face of such a terrible and all embracing disaster. And it is criminal for anyone to endeavour to profit by this catastrophe.

It was to prevent this and to avoid the duplication of energy and waste of effort, and to make the city of Allahabad pull together in one mighty effort to render relief, that the Earthquake Relief Committee, Allahabad, was started. Every attempt has been made to make this committee a thoroughly representative one of the city by the inclusion of people from various groups and communities, and if any further suitable names are suggested for inclusion, they will be gladly added to it. As chairman of the executive of this committee I appeal to our fellow citizens to concentrate on all relief going through this committee, and not fritter away their energies and their money by distributing them in various directions.

I should also like to warn them not to give money to any collectors whom they do not know. Those who are collecting on our behalf possess our receipts and we are not responsible for money collected for which our receipts are not given. Lists of donors of Re. 1 and upwards are sent to *The Leader* for publication. If any donor does not

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 31 January 1934. *The Leader*, 31 January 1934.



find his name in any list or has not received a receipt from us he is requested to make enquiries from us. We want our accounts to be in perfect condition so that they can be audited later and placed before the public.

I should like to express my deep regret to some members of our committee for their not receiving the notice of our last meeting in time. Some of these notices were insufficiently addressed and came back through the post. We are certainly responsible for this mistake. But may I also point out that a very heavy burden of work has had to be borne by some of us, and especially by our secretary, Pandit Mohanlal Nehru, during the last few days. He has not only given much time to collections but has, almost unaided, done a great deal of office work and account-keeping in connection with the collections made. We have received, besides money, about thirty maunds of blankets and clothes and most of these have been despatched to Patna.

In conclusion may I, on behalf of the Earthquake Relief Committee, appeal again for generous donations of money for relief. Allahabad has begun well and it is obvious that there is widespread sympathy and a desire to help. It has been most heartening to see the poorest giving what were to them quite substantial sums. But Allahabad has still to catch up with other cities. I am sure it will—but meanwhile men and women and children suffer dire agony in stricken Bihar.

## 91. On Conditions in Sitamarhi<sup>1</sup>

The crops are gone and there are large sheets of water all round. The future is threatened with a dangerous situation. In some places roads are passable while in others one has to go in boats for three miles at a stretch. It is monstrous to think of collecting rent now from the peasants. Rent must be remitted. I am amused to learn of the attachment of a peasant's property in Vedual (Katna Thana) for *chowkidari* tax after the earthquake. His *lota* and bedding were attached. It is extraordinary that such things should happen. Obviously, when one talks of relief it means that a person has no

1. Interview to the press, after his tour of the Sitamarhi sub-division of Muzaffarpur district, 6 February 1934. From *The Searchlight*, 9 February 1934.

resources to live upon and to ask him to pay any kind of tax is absurd. The question is not how much he is to pay but how much he is to be paid by us. Probably, in most instances officials are discouraging such tendencies but this is not a matter to be left to the discretion of individuals at such a time. Formal orders might be issued postponing all pending suits and definitely laying down that no other suits must be instituted for a definite period of some length. The situation in Sitamarhi sub-division seems to me to be full of dangerous possibilities in view of the almost total failure of the crops which have come after all these days of dead harvests and floods.

As for the complaint of the middle classes that they have not received adequate relief, I have not looked into the matter, but I am inclined to think that this complaint, while partly true, is wholly unjustifiable. It can be true in the sense that the immediate need was that of the poorest classes which had no food and which lacked the immediate necessities of life. In the case of the middle classes this was not so acute, although in individual cases it was bad. Naturally, relief agencies supplied the necessities first to those who lacked them, including members of the middle classes. The real demand from the middle classes which has not so far found fulfilment is for loans and other kinds of assistance such as help to start some kind of business etc. Some such kind of help will no doubt have to be given but it is bound to take second place during the first few weeks of urgent relief.

Compared to the town the village problem is much more important and it is increasing daily to such an extent that in two or three months a terrible famine is expected. It is a problem of supporting about 20 lakhs of men with food, clothing etc. We have to do something to prepare ourselves to face this emergency. The relief agencies plan to give support for a few months and then, feeling that things have been restored to normal conditions, the workers may return to their houses to resume their own business. We must be prepared for the terrible situation that is going to face us after two or three months.

The village problem should be carefully studied and I am convinced that immediate relief should be given there. One is frightened by looking at the condition of the villages. Sitamarhi was the granary of Bihar till now and even used to send grains to other places. The condition of the peasant here was complete nakedness before the earthquake. For the last two or three months it has been very bad because of floods, and now the earthquake has made it worse. The granary has gone underground. I have seen the inside of houses where, due to water coming from underground, sands five to six feet high have accumulated. Now the rains will come and the road problem will



become very acute. There are already large sheets of water and with the rains the villages will become absolutely unapproachable. In some of the villages all the houses have been razed to the earth. In one place, where there was very little sand, the removal of the same for one *bigha* of land cost nearly eighteen rupees, which means that lakhs of rupees are required to make the land cultivable. In other places the removal of sand results in the finding of water. As I was going on the road, I saw one cow sinking under the sand neck-deep, due to water under the sand.

A moderate estimate shows that a sum of four to five crores of rupees is required for purposes of loan. The government will have to give loans from famine funds lying with them and it is the duty of the government, not only the right of the people, that they should utilise these funds for this purpose, because neglecting this problem at present will result in acute famine.

Public works, being the best means of relief, must be created on a very wide scale, and if these are forthcoming much work could be done. Cheap grain shops, cloth shops and building materials shops should also be opened.

I feel that the villagers should be made to do cooperative relief work. Until and unless the peasants and masses do cooperative work, the relief agencies cannot carry on relief work. Relief should be given through a proper channel: form volunteer corps of able-bodied men of each village in various places, so as to make them tackle the problem of clearing wells, debris etc. Giving relief in grain and clothes is all right but that will only be making them weak and even creating a class of beggars and idlers, and unless they are organised nothing substantial can be achieved.

## 92. Conditions in North Bihar and Monghyr<sup>1</sup>

I have returned after a week's wandering over the earthquake areas in north Bihar, impressed more than ever with the havoc caused by this terrible disaster and the vastness of the problem which we have to face. I had read a great deal about the results of this earthquake; I had seen

1. Interview to the press at Patna, on his return from a tour of the north Bihar and Monghyr areas, 10 February 1934. From *The Leader*, 12 February 1934.

many pictures; I had even visited previously the ruined city of Muzaffarpur; I had thought that I had a fair idea of the conditions prevailing in the affected areas. But the actual sight of mile after mile of desolate sand-covered land, full of cracks and fissures and petty crater-like protuberances in the Sitamarhi area and elsewhere in the north, is one which I will never forget. And Monghyr—all that I had heard and read had not prepared me for the fearsome sight that met my eyes. I stood staggered and appalled at the heap of utter ruin and desolation that was once a rich and flourishing city.

I have come back with many impressions. I hope to put them down in a report which I shall submit soon to the Earthquake Relief Committee, Allahabad, and the Bihar Central Relief Committee. But I should like to pay my tribute of admiration to the numerous groups and workers from all over India, who are giving their personal service to the cause of relief. It would not have been surprising if friction had developed in this mixed and heterogeneous crowd, engaged in a novel undertaking. Some petty cases of friction have taken place but, on the whole, there has been a remarkable and most pleasing cooperation and coordination of activities. I could not discover any instance of communal or sectional activity in any group or even individual worker. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and others have pulled together and tried to work as Indians, face to face with a common disaster. It is well that the country should realise and appreciate not only the real spirit of service that our people have shown but also their powers of organization and mutual cooperation, and take pride in this.

### 93. The Inefficiency of Official Relief<sup>1</sup>

Nine gentlemen of Bihar have given a chit to the Government of Bihar for what is called their prompt action in dealing with the earthquake situation.<sup>2</sup> They have expressed their admiration and gratitude for this and have deprecated that anything should have been said to give a contrary impression. Sir Samuel Hoare has not failed to take advantage

1. 12 February 1934. *The Leader*, 15 February 1934.

2. The statement commending local officers from the "commissioner down to the ordinary constables" was published on 11 February 1934.



of this statement and has, after his wont, paid another tribute to the "magnificent services" that rule us.

In giving the certificate of good behaviour, the nine gentlemen perhaps had in view a certain statement made by me recently. I have no desire to deprive the Bihar Government of this chit, nor have I got the least wish to find fault with the government or anyone at a time of great difficulty. But in the face of an unparalleled disaster vital facts cannot be ignored or slurred over, especially when they affect future action. Individuals, on the spot, whether officials or non-officials, must have received a great shock and it would be ungenerous to judge them by standards meant for normal times. No one of us can say how he or she will behave in the face of such an overwhelming catastrophe. But governments cannot be judged by individual and personal standards. If they claim to be efficient, they have to be judged by standards of efficiency. The government we have has a measure of efficiency in certain departments—in collecting taxes, in repressing political activity, in running its bureaucratic machine, etc. It takes action swiftly and often ruthlessly when its interests are at stake. It passes new laws overnight to strengthen its position whenever that is required. But is it equally efficient and swift in other forms of activity? Was it efficient in the days immediately following the earthquake? I am sure that the Bihar Government knows in its own heart that it was not so. And I am surer still that public opinion of every shade in the affected areas thinks so, though this may not find expression in newspapers. Habitual supporters of the government, title-holders and the like, have told me so in plain enough language.

No one blames the government for the earthquake. But if the government fails to act at the right moment, it is inefficient, and if this failure results in serious loss to the community, it must be held responsible for this loss. The government we have has a long record of inefficiency in many matters and a classic description of this was given by the late Mr. E.S. Montagu in connection with the Mesopotamian muddle.<sup>3</sup>

The first step that the government had to take immediately after the catastrophe was to act swiftly, measure up the situation, restore communications, and try to save life and lessen human suffering and loss. A study of the earlier *communiqués* of the Bihar Government will show how erroneously they viewed the situation and how they tried to minimise

3. Montagu had attributed the military failure in Mesopotamia in 1916 mainly to the machinery of the India Office which "produces an apotheosis of circumlocution and red tape."



the loss. Even district officers who wanted to take quick action had no assistance then from their government. Large numbers of living persons were lying under the debris suffering untold agonies and dying the most painful of deaths. What steps did the government take to rescue them in these vital early days? What has it done since in regard to this? So far as I know the government has not attempted to remove the debris from any considerable number of houses. Some roads have certainly been cleared, and this was an important matter, but the houses with their dead and half-dead remained. It was not a very difficult matter to rush troops to clear this debris, or to utilise the services of the thousands of railway workers at Jamalpur or Monghyr, or to engage an army of labourers for this special purpose. No such step was taken and the debris remains still, except where it has been removed to a small extent by private agencies. But private and non-official agencies have many difficulties to face, some of these of the government's making, some due to the sacrosanct laws of private property.

A fact, which has a terrible significance, is the recovery of living persons from under the debris, day after day, right up to the thirteenth day after the earthquake. Many bodies were also recovered which doctors testified to having died a day or two earlier. How many died during that fateful period when they might have been rescued alive if real efforts in that direction had been made?

The government has demonstrated that it can produce special laws and ordinances at a moment's notice. Could it not declare a state of emergency in the affected areas and pass special measures to deal with the new conditions swiftly as other governments have done under similar circumstances? But its energy and ingenuity seem to be exhausted in dealing with Chittagong and Midnapur and the like.

I have no desire to go back to past events and to cry over spilt milk. But if the government wants to surround itself with the halo of sanctity and to gather chits of good character, it will have to face criticism. And the purpose of this criticism is not to waste time and energy over past happenings, which are beyond remedy, but to take a lesson for the future. The situation cannot be met by pious phrases and platitudes or by the wooden methods of a red tape-ridden officialdom living in the ruts of routine. Vision is necessary, and courage, and an organic view of the present situation, so that even out of the disaster something worthwhile might emerge. I know that many officers of the government are devoting themselves to the work of relief with commendable energy. But that energy will not carry them far unless the mind of the government behind them functions with speed and efficiency.



## MISCELLANEOUS

94. On the Understanding of History<sup>1</sup>

When my friend and colleague, Acharya Narendra Deva of Kashi Vidyapeeth,<sup>2</sup> asked me to write a foreword to this book, I hesitated a little. I had little time and having recently come out of jail was very busy. Then I saw what the book was about and I gladly agreed to write something. After reading part of the book I became more convinced that I should write because I desired that this book should be widely read. I have not finished reading the book as yet and therefore do not want to say anything about it in detail. But I have seen enough to know that Shri Mukundilal Srivastava<sup>3</sup> has written extremely well on various aspects of imperialism and has thrown considerable light on a major problem of our present-day world.

There are several ways of reading history and understanding it. One view is that a variety of events takes place, and great men appear and leave their powerful impact on the country and on the world. Any event is not specifically related to any other; sometimes events occur suddenly and sometimes they are coincidental. The other interpretation of history is that events are all closely inter-related. One event affects the other and if all the developments of world history are taken together then some sort of laws and causes emerges and we can understand the course and significance of world history. By knowing this, some light is thrown on all the events of world history and we can see our course ahead.

1. 8 October 1933. Foreword to *Samrajyavad Kya Aur Kaise Phaila* by Mukundilal Srivastava, published in 1933. Original in Hindi.
2. With the object of providing higher education, through the medium of Hindi, to students who had left government-recognised institutions, Shiv Prasad Gupta started the Kashi Vidyapith. It was inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1921. Dr. Bhagavan Das was the first chancellor and Acharya Narendra Deva, the first principal.
3. (b. 1896); journalist; his published works include *Brihat Hindi Shabda Kosh* and *Jnana Shabda Kosh*.

In our country and in many others, history is still mostly interpreted in the first way. Everywhere are to be found people who consider their own country the best, and regard it as sacred soil. They study their ancient history and award it a high place—it becomes *satyayug* or *Ramrajya*; and the hope remains that the same may be restored. They do not ponder over the real reasons that cause national progress and decline and revolutions. But the advanced communities in Europe do not now understand history in this way. They prefer the other viewpoint and thereby gain a proper understanding of history and the present-day conditions of the world.

Many people in India these days are perplexed as to what to do and how. The present-day world and the condition of our country look strange and meaningless to us. The reason for this confusion is that we have not understood the real meaning of history. When we secure this understanding our way will be clear and no event of today will seem meaningless.

In this book an attempt has been made to view history in a new perspective. There have been vast empires for thousands of years, but modern imperialism is a new concept developed for the first time in recent years. At present almost all the countries of the world (except Soviet Russia) are in its grip. We fight against it in India and want to be free of it. But very few of us have understood its real import and often mistake it for the imperialism of old. Unless we understand this new imperialism properly and discern its roots and branches, we cannot grasp the conditions of the present-day world and cannot properly wage our battle for freedom.

So, because the various aspects of modern imperialism are explained in this book, I welcome it. This is not a book for a few persons or even for one or two thousands, but for millions. Anyone who works for the country should pay attention to this issue and understand it.

I am, however, sorry that the language used in this book seems a bit too difficult and many people will not be able to understand it. I could not understand many words but, unfortunately, I am almost illiterate in Hindi. It seems to me that such books should be written not for a few scholarly persons but should be such that a person with very limited reading—a farmer or a labourer even—should be able to understand it. Unless the masses understand it, our labour will be in vain.



## 95. On the Death of Vithalbhai Patel<sup>1</sup>

One by one the old guard of leaders and fighters for India's freedom pass away, leaving terrible emptiness behind.<sup>2</sup> The strain of fighting breaks up their physical strength. Prison life at an advanced age ruins their health but the call of the great cause continues to beckon them and they go forward till the end in health and sickness in India and abroad. Mr. Vithalbhai Patel was a fighter for this cause, a warrior of the battalion for India's freedom and even in death the last words that came from his lips echoed the passion that had consumed him. It is idle and somewhat presumptuous for me to pay the usual tribute to Vithalbhai, but I can say with assurance that we of the younger generation will treasure his memory and draw inspiration from his example. The great cause of freedom has consumed many brave warriors in its fire and it will consume many more of India's sons and daughters. That cause remains, the fight continues and shall continue till the goal is reached. We, who had the privilege of working with Vithalbhai Patel in the common undertaking, have learnt of his passing away with deep pain and sorrow. What must be the shock to his brother, Sardar Vallabhbhai, as he lies in his lonely cell in Nasik Jail!<sup>3</sup>

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 24 October 1933. *The Tribune*, 26 October 1933.
2. Vithalbhai Patel died on 21 October 1933 in Geneva.
3. He had rejected the government's offer of parole for two days to perform the cremation.

## 96. To Mahatma Gandhi<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
October 27, 1933

My dear Bapu,

I should like to have your advice in the matter of the Allahabad Congress Hospital. This hospital was situated in Swaraj Bhawan and functioned successfully till the end of 1931 when Swaraj Bhawan was seized

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

by the police. All our expensive equipment and medicines—there were even six unopened cases of fresh medicines worth Rs. 2000/—were taken possession of by the police. An ambulance car had the same experience. After some interval, the British authorities, more for show purposes than for anything else, proclaimed that they would continue to keep a dispensary open in Swaraj Bhawan for the public. For the last year or two this dispensary has been supposed to function. But there is no evidence that even a single member of the public has ever taken advantage of it. Some policemen go there occasionally for treatment. Anand Bhawan overlooks Swaraj Bhawan and no one here has seen any patient enter or come out of the place. And yet I am told false entries are made in their books to show that many patients are being treated. However, I am not interested in this.

The Congress Hospital after being turfed out of Swaraj Bhawan had no home and for some weeks it established itself under a big tree in a public park nearby. Medicines were distributed from this open place and in the course of two months under the tree it treated 2500 outdoor patients.

In April 1932, the hospital was established in a cottage belonging to me. This little house adjoins Swaraj Bhawan on the side away from Anand Bhawan. Previously this house had been rented out. As soon as we could get it vacated we established the hospital there and it has been functioning there ever since. Some threats were made by the authorities but they were ignored. It was also suggested by them that if the word Congress was dropped from the name they would not interfere. This proposal was rejected and the hospital continued to be described on its board as the Congress Hospital and it continued to display the national flag. The government did not then interfere with it.

Indoor patients were not taken but during the year ending 31st March 1933, as many as 58,000 outdoor patients were treated. During the six months ending 30 September 1933, 37,034 outdoor patients have been treated. We have reduced our maintenance charges very greatly and have spent during the last 18 months Rs. 8,360/- over the hospital. This works out to about Rs. 465/- a month. A great part of these funds has been received from the profits of the Allahabad Swadeshi Exhibition. We have not received much directly from the public except medicines and surgical appliances from some firms in Bombay. But a great part of the latter went to the government. We have now almost exhausted our present resources. Some little money may come to us from the next Swadeshi Exhibition but such an existence is rather a precarious one and I should have liked to provide for the hospital for at least the next two



years. It is doing good work and it has kept the flag flying during a period of considerable difficulty.

Would you advise us to make a public appeal for funds giving the above facts? I am afraid that many people who might otherwise help may not be keen on doing so openly under the existing circumstances although the hospital as such has nothing whatever to do with politics. If a public appeal has to be made who is to make it? The person who is most intimately connected with the hospital is my cousin Mohanlal Nehru. Kamala has also been much interested in it. Of the local committee there is no one of real importance and some of them have practically dropped out during the last two years of storm and stress.

I might mention that in calculating the expenditure of the hospital I have not included house rent. The rent of the house, which used to be Rs 75/- p.m., is my own contribution to the hospital expenses.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal

## 97. To Bharati Sarabhai<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
28.10.33

My dear Bharati,

I received your note soon after my discharge from gaol but I delayed answering it as I wanted to send you the photograph you wanted. I searched for it and could not find a spare one. The latest photograph—apart from snapshots—was one taken in Ceylon in the summer of 1931, that is, nearly two and a half years ago. It makes me look much younger than I am now but that perhaps is not such a bad thing after all. Not possessing a spare copy of the photograph I have written to Ceylon for it. As soon as it comes I shall send it to you. I shall also try to send a copy for Suhrid.<sup>2</sup> Both will be sent to your address and you can hand one of them to Suhrid.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (1913-1942); son of Ambalal Sarabhai and brother of Bharati Sarabhai.

You must be full of Oxford and your new life there. It is a fascinating place with an extraordinary charm, and, in spite of its narrow outlook on life, it gives something to its votaries that is hard to find elsewhere. Much the same can be said of Cambridge. But however much Oxford may absorb you, you will not, you cannot, forget what is happening in India. And I know that the call of India will grow and fill your mind.

Mridula wired to me on her discharge. I have asked her to pay us a visit here. I wish she would come but she is so shy and reserved that I doubt if she will do so.

Give my love to Suhrid and keep a lot of it for yourself. I have a fairly long memory for my friends but for you it is a little longer and more vivid than for many others.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 98. To E.G. Nair<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

November 9, 1933

Dear Friend,<sup>2</sup>

Your letter. To bless a new periodical before one has seen what it is like, seems to be a precarious undertaking. I am afraid I am no admirer of Indian periodicals. They are extraordinarily poor compared to foreign ones. If you can bring out something which shows that it has intellectual efficiency behind it and not merely the dull routine work of schoolmasters and old world politicians ignorant of the present conditions then indeed I shall welcome your *Review*, not otherwise.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. He planned to edit a monthly journal, *The Standard Review*, on the lines of the *Modern Review* and asked Jawaharlal for a message.



**99. To Gangadharrao Deshpande<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad

November 9, 1933

My dear Gangadharraoji,

Your letter about the Bellary exhibition.<sup>2</sup> I am not going to Madras for the youth conference or anywhere else for exhibitions and the like. I have even refused to open the exhibition being held in my own city of Allahabad. I feel that those of us who are carrying on the political and aggressive activities of the Congress must not divert their energies to the side-shows. It is not merely a question of time and energy but one of creating a psychological atmosphere. I have, therefore, informed the Bellary exhibition people that I cannot come. I am sure you will understand me.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. He invited Jawaharlal to open an exhibition at Bellary sometime in December 1933.

**100. On Hindi Literature<sup>1</sup>**

We may regard ancient Hindi literature as court literature. Most often poets and writers produced literary pieces in order to please the court under whose patronage they lived. Days have now changed. Literature can become effective only if new vigour and life is infused and contemporary ideas absorbed.

The manner in which the Hindi-Urdu controversy is being posed is not correct. It is generating among the Muslims the feeling that this is being done to oppress and suppress Urdu.

1. Banaras, 12 November 1933. From *Aaj*, 14 November 1933. Original in Hindi.

While Hindi lags behind, Bengali, Marathi and Gujarati have advanced further because we find that they incorporate progressive ideas of the modern world. I know of people who in their desire to read Bengali literature have learnt the language but I know none who with the sole aim of reading Hindi literature have learnt the language.

If we were independent and I had the authority, I would first of all make arrangements to translate into Hindi 300 or 400 well-known literary works of the world.

### 101. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

14.11.33

Indu sweetheart,

We returned from Benares last night after a very strenuous and tiring visit. This morning I received your letter, well timed to reach me on my birthday. When one gets so old as I am, birthdays are not quite so welcome as they used to be. But a birthday letter from you is always very welcome and your few lines made me happy.

But why did you suddenly think of apologising for something that I do not know? 'Forgive and forget'—what am I to forgive and forget? There is seldom any question of forgiving and forgetting between friends, and I hope you and I are friends, though you happen at the same time to be a dearly loved daughter. What is far more important is for people to understand each other.

I sent you your books from Benares. There were two small French dictionaries. You wanted an English-French one. I could not find any good one here. The pocket one I have sent is not much good. I think you had better get Cassell's French-English and English-French in one volume. This is the best students' dictionary that I know of and it is not expensive. I used it in Harrow! Of course since then there have been many later editions. You can easily get a copy in Bombay.

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



I enclose some stamps, stamped envelopes and postcards. About the torch—I can't find a decent one here. There is no point in my buying a new one here and sending it to you. The postage will be nearly as much as the cost of the torch and there is a possibility of its breaking on the way. I am therefore asking Jal to get a new torch for you. He will send it to you or give it to you.

My age is becoming a delicate subject, not fit for public reference. I was born on the 14th November 1889—so you can calculate it. The date is a hundred years after the storming of the Bastille, which took place in 1789 and began the French Revolution. That is something to help you to remember it by if you think it worth remembering.

*Chhoti puphi* is apparently still in Ahmedabad. Her address there is: Ghikanta Wadi, Ahmedabad. If she goes to Bombay she will of course let you know. Raja's<sup>2</sup> address there is: 21, New Marine Lines, Fort.

I am glad you like your new school. Why do you say that there is little possibility of your passing this year? Of course you will pass and pass well.

I am afraid there is little chance of my going to Bombay. Jal wires to ask me to come down but I doubt if I can go.

We have had a French couple here in Allahabad. They brought a letter of introduction from a certain Prof. Alba who wrote to say that he had come here last year, when I was in gaol and had met Miss Nehru who talked in French to him. Was it you who met him? I have had a chance of French conversation with the couple who came. It was a very halting affair but they were perfectly delighted to hear French and to talk it after a long interval. They did not know much English. Poor Madame got malaria and was laid up for a week. They have gone now to Benares and may go on to Bombay. Their names are M. and Mme. Deleplanque. *Bari puphi* has had the Poona photographs.

I learn that *chhoti puphi* has gone to Bombay.

I shall send you typed copies of the letters<sup>3</sup> for yourself and Mr. Vakil after a few days. I want to revise them before sending them, to correct typing mistakes.

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

2. G. P. Hutheesing (b. 1906); married Krishna Nehru in 1933; secretary, National Planning Committee and China Aid Committee appointed by the Congress; honorary Planning Adviser to the Ministry of Rehabilitation, 1947.
3. Published as *Glimpses of World History* by Kitabistan, (Allahabad, 1934).



Silamahi 5/2/34  
Town

The remains of a big house

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I have had little time to attend to them so far but the thought of publication has often occurred to me. It is difficult for me to judge of their value. They deal with world history in a sort of jumpy way with a connecting link, and there are many personal and intimate touches in them. Recently I enquired from Indian publishers and many of them were keen on publishing them. The Indian office of the Oxford University Press also have said that they are prepared to consider them. So far I have not sent the manuscript or typescript to any firm. I am having the letters typed.

There are certain obvious advantages in having them published by a good English firm rather than in India. I am by no means sure that the Oxford University Press will finally agree to do the job. Their Indian office is not very enterprising and largely deals with school textbooks, so it might be worthwhile to approach Allen & Unwin or Gollancz or some other well-known firm. I shall be grateful indeed if you or Miss Harrison could do so.

I shall send you in a few days a copy of the old letters which were published in book form as well as the typescript of some of the new ones. If it is considered worthwhile to issue an English edition of the old letters (which have already been published), I shall gladly agree to it. My publishers here have no objection to it.

The publication of the new letters is a much bigger task. To give you some idea of their length: there are about 2000 foolscap pages of manuscript. I enclose a list of these letters to enable you to form some idea of the subjects dealt with.

In case the letters are to be published in England would it be desirable to have a separate Indian edition published here? I am not quite sure how these things work out. Of course there are going to be editions here in some of the Indian languages—Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Bengali etc. But I am not quite clear if the English language edition should be printed and published in both England and India at the same time.

There is always a possibility of my going back to prison suddenly. In case this happens I think it would be best if you communicated with my sister, Mrs. Pandit, 6, Cawnpore Road, Allahabad. She will know what I want done.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

### 103. Rammohan Roy<sup>1</sup>

An age of transition is always a difficult period to pass through. Human nature is terribly conservative and sticks to the old ruts. But life is dynamic and ever-changing, and so it happens from time to time that life goes ahead leaving social forms and customs far behind. There is a tremendous lag which prevents society from progressing, but as life must go ahead the lag has to be made good speedily.

Rammohan Roy<sup>2</sup> came during such a period of transition in India. Indian political forces had broken down and society was stagnant. There was decay and degeneration everywhere and yet the people generally remained in the old grooves. It required the vision of a really great man to sense that the old order had had its day and to have glimpses of the future. And it required great strength of will to fight for this change and to oppose the entrenched armies of reaction. Rammohan Roy had that vision and strength and he has rightly earned for himself the title of 'father of modern India'. Wise and learned in the ways of the old world as well as of the new, he formed the ideal link between the two, and he started India on the path which she has followed with growing speed ever since.

This path has now brought India to another and a greater period of transition. Again, life pushes ahead while reaction holds back, fearful of change. As always, life will win but there will be many a hard struggle before the change is made. And in these days of struggle and change it is inevitable that our minds go back a hundred years and think of our great countryman who fought the battle of progress on a number of fronts almost single-handed, and draw inspiration from his example.

1. Message on the centenary of the death of Rammohan Roy, 23 November 1933. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (1772-1833); founded the Brahmo Samaj, 1828; prominent in the agitation for the abolition of *sati*; pioneer of Indian journalism.



104. To Syed Mahmud<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
24.11.33

My dear Mahmud,  
Thank you so much for your gift of books. Some of them are specially welcome. There were two or three which I already possessed. As it happened, Tewari was going to Calcutta that day and I decided to send these three books back to the Book Company with him. I shall get other books instead. I hope you do not mind.

As for the razor it is very beautiful and all that but you seem to have overlooked the fact that it was British-made. For a long time past I have not purchased or used any British articles consciously, with the exception of books and very special medicines. Indeed I try not to use foreign articles as far as possible. As for razors I have just invested in a seven anna Indian-made safety razor which I intend using. I am also using Indian blades. What then am I to do with your beautiful English razor? I think you had better take it back and give it to some of your friends who use such things. I have no use for a British razor.

The Jubbulpore meeting<sup>2</sup> is definitely fixed for December 4th. So please turn up there.

You need not feel put out about forgetting my birthday. If a person is worried such things are bound to happen. There are bigger things than birthdays.

Yes, we did not discuss personal matters. You ought to know me sufficiently to realise that I never discuss them unless the other party takes the initiative. I would not do so even with Kamala or Indu. Such has been my training.

Thank you for your translation of the letters. I have sent it on to Kitabistan.

Love,

Yours affly.,  
Jawahar

1. Syed Mahmud Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. The informal meeting of Congress leaders. See *ante*, item 31.

105. To C.K. Narayanaswami<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

December 2, 1933

My dear Narayanaswami,<sup>2</sup>

I have your letter.<sup>3</sup> It is really extraordinary how people talk tall and do nothing. I should have thought Bombay at least would provide an active and aggressive group of workers but so far there is no evidence of that.

I am very sorry to learn about your eye trouble and your domestic difficulties. I really do not know what I can advise you from here. There are so many of my colleagues who are in similar difficulties and there seems to be no way out. Indeed there can be no way out and the more our struggle assumes a revolutionary character the more these difficulties will increase. When I see scores of thousands of peasants who have been deprived of everything they possessed and are utterly helpless I feel ashamed of my own condition and yet all of us are powerless till the system itself is changed. A time is coming when every person who takes an active part in the movement must not merely go to prison but take the definite risk of losing every single thing he possesses. Of course, this will result, and is resulting, in thoroughly frightening the possessing class.

The Servants of the People's Society is a small group. So far as I know it is in considerable financial difficulties and can meet its present liabilities with some difficulty. It stopped long ago asking for new recruits. I do not think you can expect any help from it.

I am sending you two pamphlets containing some of my articles. I have no present intention of going to Bombay. If something extraordinary turns up I shall go there.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Journalist; director of publicity, Khadi and Village Industries Commission, Bombay, 1961.

3. He complained that Congressmen had not actively organized the discontented tenants.



**106. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad

16.12.33

Darling,

I have just come back from Delhi and Aligarh. I am sending you Rs. 20/- for your petty expenses. Of course you will want more for your travelling expenses to Allahabad. I shall send this soon.

Do come for a few days during Christmas or else you may have to visit me in Naini! Even now it is doubtful if you will find me here.

Jamnalalji is here and he sends you his love.

Love,

Papu

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

**107. To Vijayalakshmi Pandit<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad

25.12.33

Nan darling,

I have had some scrappy news of you since you all left. But I have presumed that you are having a good and restful holiday and the children are enjoying themselves. I have just returned from Cawnpore. Indu, as you know, is here for a few days. So is Raja.

Allahabad seems to be very quiet on this Christmas day and the sun is shining brightly and almost one could imagine that India and the world were at peace. Almost—but behind the thin veil is turmoil and conflict and suffering.

I write these few lines to you to wish you all the best of new years and joy and fulfilment of your purposes.

Love,

Your loving brother,  
Jawahar

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

**108. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
January 1, 1934

Indu sweetheart,

Today is New Year's Day and my thoughts travel to you and I want to send you all my love and good wishes. We did not see very much of each other during your brief stay here but it was a delight to have you even for a few days. I am afraid we shall not meet for three or four months and even when we meet then it will be perhaps for a twenty-minute interview! But I shall feel happy in the thought that you are growing up in mind and body and fitting yourself for the great work you will have to do in after-life.

There is some chance of mummie and I going to Calcutta about the middle of this month. If we go there we shall certainly pay a visit to Santiniketan.

We are expecting Psyche<sup>2</sup> and Perin here for a day or two on their way back from Lahore where they had gone to see Bul. Padmaja may also come here on her way back from Calcutta.

Please remember to send me volume 10 of the letters which you have got.

Mummie sends her love.

Love and kisses from

Your loving  
Papu

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. Goshiben Captain, grand-daughter of Dadabhai Naoroji.

**109. To Syed Mahmud<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad  
4/1/34

My dear Mahmud,

You seem to have a way of worrying about the most trivial matters. I must say that your letters, containing references to my impending arrest,

1. Syed Mahmud Papers, N.M.M.L.



surprise me. You seem to forget what is happening in India and talk in terms of petty domestic troubles. I wish you would appreciate that I think somewhat differently.

Do come here when you can. I hope to be here for at least another week, and maybe ten days.

Kamala wants me to thank you for the ghee and the eatables you have sent.

Mother is getting on fairly well.

Love,

Yours affly.,  
Jawahar

#### 110. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
12.1.34

*Bien ainee,*

Your letter has just come. It does seem a pity that you should live so near the sea and yet not have a swim in it. I am writing to Mr. Vakil. Of course there are bad patches but it should be possible to choose a good place in Juhu. It is better to go some distance to a safe and good place than to choose a bad one. On Sundays plenty of our friends go to Juhu to have a dip and swim. I suppose you know some of them like Psyche etc. You could always go then. You could also go to Juhu on another day of the week and if necessary someone could go with you. I don't think there will be much difficulty about making the arrangements.

I sent you Marguerite Agnid's book with *chhoti puphi*. I hope she gave it to you. I do so want you to develop your body for this is the foundation of health and beauty. You are too weak at present. Your back is not at all strong—and don't you want to have a stiff backbone?

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

I have felt that a little exercise makes all the difference in the world. The day seems brighter and we are more cheerful and lighter on our feet.

When you swim, run a little in the sand afterwards. This takes the chill off.

Mummie sends her love.

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

### 111. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Santiniketan  
January 19, 1934

Darling Indu boy,

We had three and a half very strenuous days in Calcutta and now we are at Santiniketan. We arrived here this evening and were welcomed by the Poet and all the students and staff who had gathered together. The Poet read out some lines in welcome which were very beautiful.

We have been put up in the Poet's own house. We have got delightful little rooms with fascinating furniture—low chairs and tables and little artistic knick-knacks. Art is of course the strong point of this place and everything has the artistic touch.

The electric lights have all gone out and I am writing this by the light of a hurricane lantern. It is nearly midnight and mummie is asleep. Although I am tired I wanted to send you a few lines for I have not written to you for many days and I may not be able to write again soon. We shall be travelling for another three days before we reach Allahabad.

Tomorrow we shall go over Santiniketan and Sriniketan where the farm is. I shall have a talk with the Poet and later with the students and staff. And at night we shall again take to the train and journey on. Our next halt will be Patna. We are staying there for the day to see Rajendra Babu and confer with him about relief work for the earthquake areas. There has been terrible destruction and loss of life and large numbers of children are homeless.

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



We felt the earthquake distinctly in Allahabad on the 15th. I was standing at the time in the verandah speaking to a crowd of kisans. Suddenly I started wobbling and when I discovered that it was an earthquake I was interested and greatly amused. Nothing much happened in Allahabad but in Bihar it has not been a matter for amusement. Whole cities have been destroyed. Did you feel the earthquake?

We hope to be back in Allahabad on the 22nd.

I have given the Last Letter<sup>2</sup> of the series I wrote to you in prison to the *Modern Review* to be published in the next number. A Hindi translation will also appear in February in the *Saraswati*.

I must go to bed now for we have to get up early to have tea with the Poet.

All my love (and mummie's also, although she is asleep!)

Your loving  
Papua

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 493-499.

## 112. Address to the Prayag Mahila Vidyapitha<sup>1</sup>

Many years ago—so much has happened during recent years that I have almost lost the exact count of time and even a few years seem long ago—I had the honour of laying the foundation stone of the hall of the Mahila Vidyapitha.<sup>2</sup> Since then I have been engrossed in the dust and tumble of politics and direct action, and the struggle for India's freedom has filled my mind. I have lost touch with the Mahila Vidyapitha. During the last four months that I have been in the wider world outside the prison walls many a call has come to me and I have been invited to participate in a variety of public activities. I have not listened to these calls and have kept away from these activities, for my ears were open to only one call and all my energy was directed to one end. That

1. *The Leader*, 24 January 1934. Reprinted in *Recent Essays and Writings*, (Allahabad, 1934), pp. 148-153. As Jawaharlal could not be present, the address was read out on his behalf on 20 January 1934.
2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 361.

call was the call of India, our unhappy and long oppressed motherland, and especially of our suffering and exploited masses, and that end was the complete freedom of the Indian people.

I have refused therefore to be drawn away from the main issue to other and minor activities, important as some of these were in their own limited spheres. But when Shri Sangam Lal came to me and pressed me to address the convocation of the Mahila Vidyapitha, I found it difficult to resist his appeal. For behind that appeal I saw the girls and young women of India, on the threshold of life, trying to free themselves from an age-long bondage and peeping into the future with diffidence and yet, as youth will, with the eyes of hope.

I agreed, therefore, provisionally and diffidently for I was not sure if a more urgent call would not call me elsewhere. And now I find that urgent call has come from the sorely afflicted province of Bengal<sup>3</sup> and I must go there and I may not be back in time for the convocation of the Mahila Vidyapitha. I regret this and all I can do is to leave this message behind.

If our nation is to rise, how can it do so if half the nation, if our womankind, lag behind and remain ignorant and uneducated? How can our children grow up into self-reliant and efficient citizens of India if their mothers are not themselves self-reliant and efficient? Our history tells us of many wise women and many that were true and brave even unto death. We treasure their examples and are inspired by them, and yet we know that the lot of women in India and elsewhere has been an unhappy one. Our civilization, our customs, our laws, have all been made by man and he has taken good care to keep himself in a superior position and to treat woman as a chattel and a plaything to be exploited for his own advantage and amusement. Under this continuous pressure woman has been unable to grow and to develop her capacities to her fullest, and then man has blamed her for her backwardness.

Gradually, in some of the countries of the West, woman has succeeded in getting a measure of freedom, but in India we are still backward, although the urge to progress has come here too. We have to fight many social evils; we have to break many an inherited custom that enchains us and drags us down. Men and women, like plants and flowers, can only grow in the sunlight and fresh air of freedom; they wilt and stunt themselves in the dark shadow and suffocating atmosphere of alien domination.

3. Jawaharlal had been invited to address a public meeting at Calcutta to protest against the repression in Chittagong and Midnapur. For a report of this speech see *ante*, item 39.



For all of us, therefore, the first problem that presents itself is how to free India and remove the many burdens of the Indian masses. But the women of India have an additional task and that is to free themselves from the tyranny of man-made customs and laws. They will have to carry on this second struggle by themselves for man is not likely to help them.

Many of the girls and young women present at the convocation will have finished their courses, taken their degrees, and prepared themselves for activities in a larger sphere. What ideals will they carry with them to this wider world, what inner urge will fashion them and govern their actions? Many of them, I am afraid, will relapse into the humdrum day-to-day activities of the household and seldom think of ideals or other obligations; many will think only of earning a livelihood. Both these are no doubt necessary, but if this is all that the Mahila Vidyapitha has taught its students, it has failed in its purpose. For a university that wishes to justify itself must train and send out into the world knight errants in the cause of truth and freedom and justice, who will battle fearlessly against oppression and evil. I hope there are some such amongst you, some who prefer to climb the mountains, facing risk and danger, to remaining in the misty and unhealthy valleys below.

But our universities do not encourage the climbing of mountains; they prefer the safety of the lowlands and valleys. They do not encourage initiative and freedom; like true children of our foreign rulers, they prefer the rule of authority and a discipline imposed from above. Is it any wonder that their products are disappointing and ineffective and stunted, and misfits in this changing world of ours?

There have been many critics of our universities and most of their criticisms are justified. Indeed hardly anyone has a good word for the Indian universities. But even the critics have looked upon the university as an upper class organ of education. It does not touch the masses. Education to be real and national must have roots in the soil and reach down to the masses. That is not possible today because of our alien government and our old-world social system. But some of you who go out of the Vidyapitha and help in the education of others must bear this in mind and work for a change.

It is sometimes said, and I believe the Vidyapitha itself lays stress on this, that woman's education should be something apart from that of man's. It should train her for household duties and for the widely practised profession of marriage. I am afraid I am unable to agree to this limited and one-sided view of women's education. I am convinced that women should be given the best of education in every department



of human activity and be trained to play an effective part in all professions and spheres. In particular, the habit of looking upon marriage as a profession almost and as the sole economic refuge for woman will have to go before woman can have any freedom. Freedom depends on economic conditions even more than political and if woman is not economically free and self-earning she will have to depend on her husband or someone else, and dependents are never free. The association of man and woman should be of perfect freedom and perfect comradeship with no dependence of one on the other.

What will you do, graduates and others of the Vidyapitha, when you go out? Will you just drift and accept things as they are, however bad they may be? Will you be content with pious and ineffective expressions of sympathy for what is good and desirable and do nothing more? Or will you justify your education and prove your mettle by hurling defiance at the evils that encompass you? The *purdah*, that evil relic of a barbarous age, which imprisons the body and mind of so many of our sisters—will you not tear it to bits and burn the fragments? Untouchability and caste, which degrade humanity and help in the exploitation of one class by another—will you not fight them and end them and thus help in bringing a measure of equality in this country? Our marriage laws and many of our out-of-date customs which hold us back and especially crush our womenfolk—will you not combat them and bring them in line with modern conditions? Will you not also fight with energy and determination for the physical improvement of our women by games in the open air and athletics and sane living so that India may be full of strong and healthy and beautiful women and happy children? And, above all, will you not play a gallant part in the struggle for national and social freedom that is convulsing our country today?

I have put these many questions to you, but the answers to them have already come from thousands of brave girls and women who have played a leading part in our freedom struggle during the last four years. Who has not been thrilled at the sight of our sisters, unused as they were to public activity, leaving the shelter of their homes and standing shoulder to shoulder with their brothers in the fight for India's freedom? They shamed many a person who called himself a man, and they proclaimed to the world that the women of India have arisen from their long slumber and would not be denied their rights.

The women of India have answered, and so I greet you, girls and young women of the Mahila Vidyapitha, and I charge you to keep that torch of freedom burning brightly till it spreads its lustre all over this ancient and dearly loved land of ours.



113. To Krishna Hutheesing<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

21.1.34

Betty darling,

Nan has given me some news of you which is not very satisfying. You are not well, I understand, and not very cheerful. I hope you have got over your indisposition. It is not worthwhile to be unwell in mind or body.

If reports and portents are to be believed I am likely to leave the shelter of Anand Bhawan soon for another place. It does not matter overmuch to me for I have learnt to be moderately happy under almost any circumstances. But before I go, I want to send you these few lines conveying, if ink and paper can convey such precious but insubstantial material, all my love and good wishes for your happiness. You will often be in my thoughts and to know that you are bravely facing the little and big difficulties that life has a way of placing before each one of us, will make me happy. We worry about little matters that do not count. Why worry then? Better to hitch our wagon to a star and live in the cooling light of its rays.

Give my love to Raja and keep a lot of it for yourself.

Your loving brother,  
Jawahar

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

114. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
25.1.34

Darling,

It is the eve of our Independence Day and I am sitting down to write to you wondering when I shall write to you again from Anand Bhawan and from this library table where I have sat, surrounded by my books, for so many long hours, month after month. I love the company of books, even when I have no time to read them. They stand there, row after row, with the wisdom of ages locked up in them, serene and untroubled in a changing and distracted world, looking down silently on the mortals that come and go. I shall miss them for a while if I go away and I shall remember them. But it really does not matter either way for I try to fit in with my surroundings wherever I may find myself.

I rather liked Santiniketan and so did mummie. I think it will be a good thing if you spent a year or so there. You may not have comforts there but that is a little matter and one should get hardened a little. It is a remarkably peaceful place. There is a German there who is a Buddhist monk. He teaches both French and German. I do not know how good he is at his work but he had an attractive face, as Buddhist monks often have. The art section is of course very good. If you go there I think it would be a good thing if you took up painting. Nand Lal Bose,<sup>2</sup> the man in charge of the art section, is one of the leading Indian painters of today, and he is a good teacher. But all this is rather premature. We can discuss it later when the time comes.

One idea, however, appeals to me. I want you to get to know the various peoples of India and if you go to Santiniketan you will pick up Bengali and get to know the Bengalis a little better. You know some Gujarati now and perhaps a little Marathi.

And now, I must say *au revoir* and end this letter with my love, which indeed you always have.

Your loving  
Papu

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. (1883-1966); distinguished painter of the Bengal School; taught for many years at Visvabharati; Padma Vibhushan, 1955.



**115. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>**

Allahabad

29.1.34

Indu dear,

I have survived Independence Day although I did my best not to do so! What is to be done?

Your letter came today. No, I am not at all superstitious about the 13th. I think it is as good or bad as any other day. You must be, of course, a little excited about your preliminary examination. But examinations are not worth getting excited over. They seem rather terrible at a distance but if one takes them coolly there is nothing exciting in them.

I have received volume 10 of the letters. Thanks.

We are all busy collecting money for Bihar relief. Anand Bhawan is full of blankets and clothes which people are sending.

Dolamma is getting on well. Mummie is terribly busy going from house to house and shop to shop collecting money.

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

**116. Five Months and Thirteen Days—166 days<sup>1</sup>**

August 30th 1933 to February 12th 1934

Allahabad

Lucknow

Allahabad

31/8 to 2/9

1. Itinerary for the period Jawaharlal was out of prison. Jail Note Book No. 20, pp. 13-14. N.M.M.L.

# SELECTED WORKS OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Lucknow	5/9 to 8/9
Poona	9/9 to 14/9
Bombay	15/9—17/9
Lucknow	19/9—Oct.
Allahabad	October
Banaras	
Allahabad	
Cawnpore	
Allahabad	
Jubbulpore	
Allahabad	
Delhi	
Aligarh	
Allahabad	
Calcutta	16/1/34—19/1
Santiniketan	20/1
Patna	21/1
Muzaffarpur	22/1
Allahabad	
Patna	3/2
Muzaffarpur—Motihari	4/2
Sitamarhi	5/2
Samastipur—Darbhanga—Madhubani	6/2—7/2
Monghyr	8/2—9/2
Patna	10/2
Allahabad	11/2



## PRISON DIARY WITH LETTERS

### 12 February 1934—12 August 1934

February 12th 1934

5.30 p.m. — Amal Bhawan — just finished a rather late tea. Kanak-Tandon — and one or two others standing in the next verandah.

A police car comes — the new City Supt. appears and I know that the man has come. He produces a warrant of arrest from Calcutta — says that it is an arrest warrant as I said but he covered himself saying that the warrant was from Calcutta — it was not his handiwork. As if in any event it could be his handiwork!

Kanak stood it well to begin with — Tandon couldn't grasp the situation for a while. Then I went to mother but Bibi had fainted — she and mother was breaking down. I consoled her and she pulled herself up a little — gave little weeps. Then passing. Suddenly Kanak broke down. Others started crying — Gora Pathi, Vidya, Bhawan, Shama Bhai (his first wife died after his attack of paralysis), Nan, Kamla and the children. Lala Bhai, Jagat, Munshi & Kashi Prasad were there when the warrant of arrest came. Kishan Das & Mohan Bhai, Mohan Bhai &c.

I drafted telegrams to Indu, Bapu & Rajendra Babu. Indu's came before today so the news of my arrest must have reached her just before the exam.

We started about 6.30 p.m. We thought we were going to Naini prison but on the way we were told that we were going to Naini station to catch the mail to Calcutta. Kanak, Rajit & Mohan Bhai accompanied me — also Tandon — to the station. And there we said goodbye and off I went in a 2nd class compartment.

At Mirzapur station I was surprised — and so was he — to find Santanam. He was also travelling in the same train to Calcutta. He gave me some welcome books.

The inspector accompanying me was a tenant of Talandar. Wanted me to give him a chit for Kalsakar putting in a good word for him for something or other!

1. In this section and section 5 check first the dates kept by Jawahar in his memo 12 February 1934 till his release on 3 September 1934, (with a break on parole for 12 days) have been printed. Letters written by him during this period have been interspersed. The dates are available in N.S.M.I.

2. I had been long expecting you.

## PRISON DIARY WITH LETTERS

12 February 1934-12 August 1934

Lucknow 19/2-19/3

Allahabad October

Banars

Allahabad

Cawnpore

Allahabad

Jubbulpore

Allahabad

Delhi

Aligarh

Allahabad

Calcutta

16/1/34-19/1

Srinagar

3/1

Patna

21/1

Muzaffarpur

2/1

Allahabad

Patna

3/1

Muzaffarpur-Mothur

4/1

Srinagar

5/1

Srinagar-Dumraon-Madhani 6/2-7/2

Muzaffarpur

8/2-9/2

Patna

10/2

Allahabad

11/2



SEVENTH CONVICTION<sup>1</sup>

February 12th 1934

5.30 p.m.—Anand Bhawan—just finished a rather late tea. Kamala—Tandon—and one or two others standing in the east verandah.

A police car comes—the new City Supt. appears and I know that the time has come. He produces a warrant of arrest from Calcutta. बहुत दिनों से आप का इन्तजार था,<sup>2</sup> I said but he excused himself saying that the warrant was from Calcutta—It was not his handiwork. As if in any event it could be his handiwork!

Kamala stood it well to begin with—Tandon couldn't grasp the situation for a while. Then I went to mother but Bibi had forestalled me and mother was breaking down. I consoled her and she pulled herself up a little—brave little woman. Then packing. Suddenly Kamala broke down. Others started arriving—Uma Bhabi, Vidya, Shammi, Shama Bhai (his first outing since his attack of paralysis), Nan, Ranjit and the children. Ladli Bhai, Janak, Muzaffar & Kashi Prasad were there when the warrant of arrest came. Kishan Dar & Mohan Bhai, Mohan Bhabi &c.

I drafted telegrams to Indu, Bapu & Rajendra Babu. Indu's exam begins today so the news of my arrest must have reached her just before the exam.

We started about 6.30 p.m. We thought we were going to Naini prison but on the way we were told that we were going to Naini station to catch the mail to Calcutta. Kamala, Ranjit & Mohan Bhai accompanied me—also Tandon—to the station. And there we said good-bye and off I went in a 2nd class compartment.

At Mirzapur station I was surprised—and so was he—to find Santanam. He was also travelling in the same train to Calcutta. He gave me some welcome books.

The inspector accompanying me was a tenant of Kalakankar. Wanted me to give him a chit for Kalakankar putting in a good word for him for something or other!

1. In this section and section 5 extracts from the diaries kept by Jawaharlal in jail from 12 February 1934 till his release on 3 September 1935, (with a break on parole for 12 days) have been printed. Letters written by him during this period have been interspersed. The diaries are available in N.M.M.L.
2. I had been long expecting you.

And so Calcutta on Tuesday morning Feb. 13th. I was taken to the Lalbazar jail or lock-up. I sat there for two hours and then I was taken to the Chief Magistrate's court—Sinha,<sup>3</sup> the Hon'ble. He told me what the charge was—showed me the report of my speeches which I had delivered in Calcutta last month. Charge under sec. 124A, sedition. He said that he was seeing me in his chambers in consideration for my feelings! He fixed Feb. 15th Thursday for the trial and wanted me to decide if it was going to be in camera or in public—Of course I told him I wanted nothing in camera.

And then I was brought to the Presidency jail in Alipur. Kept waiting at the gate. My goods & chattels examined. Money, watch, fountain pen, safety razor, knife, scissors &c. &c. taken away. Cigarettes allowed. All books & writing materials kept in office.

Shown to my cell. A small yard. Had nothing whatever to do as I had no books or writing materials. Nothing to read. No watch to give some idea of the passing of time. Fell asleep and slept rather heavily for a long time till the jailer turned up and said he would send me some reading & writing materials.

These came later in the evening—also my watch. At 6.30 I was locked in my cell and now at 7 I am writing this.

On my way from the Magistrate's court to the Presidency jail I was accompanied in the police lorry by four or five constables inside the lorry—The sergeants were outside. The constables were U.P. or Bihar men— They seemed to be much affected and looked sad. One or two of them asked me a few simple questions. Told me that I was being taken to the Presidency jail because they dared not keep me in Lalbazar which was full of policemen from the north, and they were afraid of my contaminating them. Suddenly one of the constables broke down and started blubbling!

This is a big prison. Pop. over 2000. The Supt. is a Punjabi—some Singh.<sup>4</sup>

And so begins my seventh term.

Gandhi caps not allowed inside jail. These as well as my khaki shorts & shirts kept in office....

3. Sushil Kumar Sinha, I.C.S. (1895-1937); appointed chief presidency magistrate, Calcutta, 30 September 1933.

4. Major M.A. Singh, officiating inspector general of prisons, 1931-37.



13.2.1934<sup>5</sup>

Betty darling,

So the long expected has happened and I am back again in prison. Very soon I shall fit myself into the new surroundings and carry on more or less contentedly. I am fortunate in having discovered, to some extent at least, the art of adapting myself to new environments.

My trial takes place day after tomorrow and you will probably know the result of it before you get this letter. But such results are not awaited with any excitement. One gets used to them—and this is my seventh experience of them. I am becoming quite an expert at this kind of thing!

I had a letter from you about two weeks ago and then I went off to Bihar and spent a very strenuous nine days there. I returned fagged out day before yesterday to Allahabad. I have had no more recent news from you except that Fory<sup>6</sup> was going to stay with you.

I was glad to learn that Raja and you intend shifting to a separate flat. I think it is always better for small families and individuals to live separately as far as possible. Large family groupings do not fit in with present-day conditions.

How did you like Fory? I am sorry I have missed seeing her. I wrote to her to Budapest long ago. As no reply came I wonder if my letter reached her.

Give my love to Raja and keep a lot of it for yourself. And do not permit yourself to develop the blues!

Your loving brother,  
Jawahar

Feb. 13th, 1934<sup>7</sup>

Nan dear;

I have survived the journey and I have established myself in one of the safest places in Calcutta—the Presidency jail. I am a newcomer yet to this abode of safety but I shall settle down soon enough here or elsewhere. Day after tomorrow—the 15th—my trial takes place before the Chief Presidency Magistrate—the Hon. Sinha. I was produced before him today in chambers and he told me what the charge was and showed me the reports of my speeches. He left it to me to choose

5. *Nehru's Letters to His Sister*, (London, 1963), pp. 39-40.

6. Mrs. B.K. Nehru.

7. Vijayalakshini Pandit Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

if I would like a trial in camera or in public. Naturally I preferred the latter.

As I can write a few letters as an under-trial, I have written today to Horace Alexander about the letters and to Anil Kumar Chanda<sup>8</sup> about Ghani.<sup>9</sup> I think you had better write to both also. Ranjit should also write (as I have told him) to Dr. Khan Sahib about Ghani. I want Ghani's father to feel that Ghani is being well looked after and not to worry. In the event of some difficulty arising about Ghani's entry into Santiniketan, I do not quite know what should be done. Anyway, he should stay on in Anand Bhawan. Perhaps some temporary arrangements could be made for him to continue his German and some other subject in Allahabad. This will give him something to do.

Look after mother and see to it that she keeps cheerful and does not worry. She must continue her treatment. Her little wound will probably take another month or two to heal up but she can gradually walk about a little in the verandah. An occasional drive might also be given. With the coming of summer we shall have to decide where to keep her. But that is still far off....

Your loving brother,  
Jawahar

Feb. 13, 1934<sup>10</sup>

Indu *bien aimee*,

So I am back again to my other 'home', as I wired to you. It was time I came for I was very tired with the various activities I indulged in and badly wanted a respite. My nine days in Bihar, touring the earthquake areas, were a tremendous strain and I reached Allahabad day before yesterday dead tired. I shall have plenty of rest now—perhaps too much of it!

I thought of you a great deal today. Today was the day of your examination and just before it began, the news of my arrest must have reached you. I hope this did not worry you in the least. It should have acted as a fillip!

My trial has been fixed for day after tomorrow, the 15th. I do not know what will happen afterwards and whether I shall be kept in this

8. (b. 1906); secretary to Rabindranath Tagore; Deputy Minister, Government of India, 1952-62.
9. Abdul Ghani (b. 1913); son of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan; founder of the Zalme Pakhtun Party, N.W.F.P., in 1947.
10. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



gaol or elsewhere. When you write to me, send your letter to mummie and she will forward it on.

You will be busy during the next two months or so with your examinations. I am sure you will do well in them. Take them easily without worrying at all. And then I hope to see you, wherever I may be at the time.

I have missed seeing Fory—just missed her. You met her. How did you like her?

All my love, *cara mia*,

Your loving  
Papu

### February 14th Wednesday

Had a fair night though I woke up repeatedly because of the visits of night watchmen and jail night inspectors. I was locked in at 6.30 p.m., unlocked this morning at 5.50 a.m. I expected the Supt. but he did not come. Most of the time I read Feuchtwanger's *The Oppermanns*.

Some Khanna of K.C. Khanna & Co., 162 Harrison Road sends me food. (It was Kapur.)

The text of my three speeches in Calcutta on 17th & 18th January has been sent to me.<sup>11</sup> This is the seditious matter I am going to be tried for.

And so the day has passed, and I have been locked in again.

I have written a statement for the court. But I doubt if I shall read it or give it to the Magistrate.

### Lessing:<sup>12</sup>

Go thy viewless ways, eternal Providence. But let me not despair of thee because thou art viewless. Let me not despair of thee even when thy steps seem to turn back. It is not true that the shortest line is always the most straight. Thou must have much to take with thee on thine eternal journey, and often turn aside.

11. See *ante*, section 2, items 39 and 40. The third speech is not printed as Jawaharlal thought the reporting was very inaccurate.

12. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781); German philosopher, dramatist and critic.

*Feb. 15, Thursday*

The trial came off today—Before I left the jail, I was searched. The jailer did it and he was as courteous about it as possible but anyway I was searched.

A little crowd in the street opposite the gate of the Pres. Magte's court. As my lorry turned in there was a faint attempt at a cheer. Quickly suppressed by a number of policemen who dispersed the lot.

Then waiting in the corridor. I am asked on behalf of the P. Magte. if I want to stand in the dock or have a chair. Curious questions the fellow puts! I get a chair. Have to go under a thickly wired passage and sit far from the Magte. Crowded room, chiefly black-coated lawyers and policemen. Not a single familiar face. Perhaps there may have been some in the background whom I could not see. Later Jogesh C. Gupta<sup>13</sup> came and sat not far from me across the barrier. No words were exchanged.

How different to the free and easy atmosphere, the presence of friends and relatives, at all my previous trials. Not a pleasant feeling to be isolated in this way with two European sergeants standing behind me.

I ought to be used enough to trials. I think I am and seldom worry as to what is going to take place. And yet, as I sat waiting in the court balcony before the trial began, my pulse must have quickened a little and inwardly I was not quite so composed as I might have been or as I probably appeared. And it struck me then that if even I reacted abnormally to this situation, how much more must young & inexperienced people do.

In the dock the same feeling continued—Soon, however, as I listened to the monotonous evidence of the reporters I attained normality. Later when I got up to make my statement I felt perfectly cool and collected. I did not read the statement but made it orally. I was stopped when I was about half way through by the Magte and so there it ended. But even the few sentences I said sobered the quibbling crew of lawyers who were present as well as the policemen. Judgment tomorrow.

Back again in the lorry—which is a far more formidable affair than the U.P. lorries. Small groups in the streets try to cheer. I recognise some Punjabi girls....

What is my sentence going to be? Two years? Four years? Or more? Not less than two—probably three or four.

13. A Congressman from Bengal; follower of J.M. Sen Gupta.



DRAFT STATEMENT FOR TRIAL<sup>14</sup>

I do not desire to offer any defence or to take any other formal part in this trial. But, if I am permitted, I should like to say a few words regarding the reports of the three speeches of mine, which have been made the basis of this action, and the matter contained in them. I am grateful to the court for letting me have copies of the reports of these speeches. I have read them. In so far as the reports of the two speeches delivered in the Albert Hall on the 17th and 18th January are concerned, I should like to congratulate the shorthand reporters on producing a good report. There are minor errors in these reports, some words have been omitted and some wrongly transcribed, but this was perhaps inevitable in speeches rapidly delivered extempore. On the whole, however, these two reports are substantially correct and represent what I said. These two speeches were in English. The third one, delivered at Maheshwari Bhawan on January 18th, was in Hindi, and I cannot congratulate the reporters and translator of this speech on their production. The report is scrappy and full of omissions and serious errors. Read in translation, it makes little sense and conveys a very wrong impression of what I said. Whatever I may say in my speeches, whether it is sedition or not, has, I hope, some sense, some consecutiveness, some logic about it. The report of the Hindi speech, however, does me no justice at all and misrepresents me greatly. I do not propose to point out its many errors and omissions for that would mean re-writing the whole speech. That is perhaps unnecessary as the court has already two other speeches of mine, which, as I have said above, have been reported more or less correctly, to go upon. If, however, the court wishes to understand any phrase or sentence of the Maheshwari Bhawan speech, I am prepared to correct it.

This statement of mine will perhaps lighten the burden of decision resting on the court. That burden will further be lightened by my assuring the court that my activities in the past have been seditious, if by sedition is meant an attempt to achieve the independence of India and to end completely all traces of foreign domination in this country. For many years I have laboured for this and given all my strength and energy to it, and, as the years have gone by, my conviction has gained strength that only by the elimination of all British control and the establishment of independence, can the Indian people free themselves from the terrible exploitation that has sucked them

14. 15 February 1934, J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.



dry and made this rich country a land of poverty-stricken and miserable men and women. For that ideal I hope to struggle on, in common with vast numbers of my countrymen, till success comes to us. And if that is sedition, then sedition will be, as it has been, the very life-blood which animates us and moves us to fresh endeavour. There can be no compromise, however long the struggle may last, between those who want freedom for the Indian masses and those who want to hold them down and exploit them.

I must express my gratitude to the Bengal Government for this proceeding for thereby they have associated me, in a small measure, with the past and present sufferings of the people of Bengal. That is a privilege I shall treasure. My two speeches in the Albert Hall dealt with the present situation in certain parts of Bengal and the words I uttered there gave some indication of the fire in my heart. Individuals sometimes misbehave in this imperfect world of ours; so also officials and those in power. Crowds and mobs of people also lose control of themselves sometimes and misbehave. That is regrettable. But it is a terrible thing when an organized government begins to behave like an excited mob; when brutal and vengeful and uncivilized behaviour becomes the normal temper of a government. That is what we are seeing in Bengal and in India today, and pricked by a guilty conscience, the government tries to suppress all criticism, all freedom of thought and speech and press and public assembly. Deliberately and with utmost callousness, it seeks to perpetrate the greatest sin against any people, to injure human dignity, to crush the dignity of the Indian people. That is the vital problem we have to face today in India and, for the moment, even larger issues take second place before it. Whatever happens, whatever fate may befall us, we cannot and will not submit to this national degradation and humiliation of a great people. I welcome, therefore, this opportunity that has come my way, in common with many thousands of my countrymen and countrywomen, to resist and refuse submission to this brutal spirit of official terrorism. And I trust that though my voice may be silenced for a long while, as so many voices have been silenced, we shall remain unyielding and uncompromising emblems of the spirit of the Indian people, which will not be coerced by the mightiest of governments, and which will fight its way to full freedom.



STATEMENT TO THE COURT<sup>15</sup>

I do not wish to take any part in these proceedings. I have no plea to make and I do not wish to enter into any defence, but I would like to say something in respect of those three speeches, about the reporting and the contents. With regard to the two speeches in English I congratulate the reporters on their excellent reports; they are substantially correct and do represent what I said. The third speech is not so well reported; it is a travesty of what I said.

For many years my activities have certainly been seditious if by sedition is meant the desire to achieve the independence of India and to put an end to foreign domination. I have laboured to that end with all my strength and energy for many long years; my conviction has grown stronger within me as the years go by that there can be no freedom for the Indian people or its politicians so long as there is a trace of British rule here. Therefore, I have attempted in a small degree to put an end to the British rule in this country; if that is seditious, I have been seditious for many years.

I should like to express my gratitude to the Bengal Government for the opportunity accorded me by taking these proceedings against me in associating me in a small measure with the past and present sufferings of the people of Bengal. That is a privilege which I shall always treasure. In the course of the speeches I delivered at the Albert Hall I was largely concerned with events in Bengal, Midnapur, Chittagong and elsewhere; I gave some indication of the fire in my heart. Individuals sometimes misbehave; officials also sometimes misbehave; crowds and mobs get excited and misbehave; all that is very regrettable; but it is a much more terrible thing when an organised government begins to behave like a wild mob. It is a terrible thing when brutality becomes a method of behaviour....

*February 16—Friday*

Two years' simple imprisonment—Division I. So that settles it for a while and I feel lighter now that all is over.

I was taken early to court. Search before going—search on return. My lorry passed Narajole House, 3 Minto Park—It is almost next door to the jail. Just a month ago I was staying there.

Upadhyaya was standing in the balcony of the court house. Looking rather miserable. I sat down and waited. Then came the Pres. Magte.

He said I could meet Upadhyaya and ultimately took us both inside his chambers. We had a quiet talk. Up. gave me a letter from Kamala. More or less satisfactory news though Kamala is not very well. Up. had not succeeded in coming to court yesterday. Couldn't get permission. Then Bidhan wrote to Sinha & Up. went to see him at his house. Permission given to go to the 'south verandah' of the court. No further.

It appeared that telegrams to Calcutta about my having been brought here had been stopped overnight and so no one here knew of it till long after my arrival.

After my talk with Upadhyaya, an extraordinary thing happened. Sinha addressed me beginning with an apology for his seeming impertinence. Referred to my ability & courage and all that and said how they would be wasted in prison. I had only come out recently after serving two years and should not go back again when I could do so much good work outside. Critical period for country coming when men of my parts needed. With further apologies he suggested that I might say something—some vague expression of regret—and he would see to it that matters ended there. Of course there need be no apology. Just an assurance that in future I would not deliver such strong speeches—unconstitutional &c. I was taken aback. Not so much by what he said but by his very earnest manner of saying it. I thanked him for his courtesy and his suggestion but told him that it was quite impossible for me to give any such assurance. It was not a question of personal dignity but of national dignity—Govt. was trying to crush human dignity in India &c. Still he persisted with great earnestness. Pointed out the difficulties in Bengal—the communal issue (How did the communal issue come in?). Said that a word or a hint from me would be enough, and he would adjourn the matter and himself see the Governor about it today, and these proceedings could be withdrawn. Would I not agree to this little thing for the sake of the larger cause? And so he went on. I was a little touched by this vehemence and perhaps my pride was somewhat tickled by his words and manner. And yet I wondered that he should know me so little as to suggest this course. I tried to disillusion him as gently, but firmly, as possible. He said that the alternative was a long sentence. He could not give me a short sentence for what I had said. I entirely agreed. Another last effort to win me over and then, when this too failed, he produced his judgment, which lay ready before him, and signed it. 'Two years' simple imprisonment', he said, and 'of course Division I'. I thanked him.



I thought that this was just a private intimation and that the sentence would be pronounced in court. But as soon as I went out of his chamber I was asked by the police sergeant to depart. The whole thing was over and off I went to the lorry. A few odd *Bandematarams* in the street and then the drive through the *maidan*, past the Victoria Memorial, Narajole House, Alipore Bridge & Presidency jail.

Why was Sinha so keen on avoiding sentencing me? Obviously all this was not *suo motu* although he spoke to me personally, referred to my father and expressed his sorrow at having to deal with me in this way. He is far from being a popular man—has the reputation of being a hard Magistrate—a favourite of the powers that be. Perhaps he felt it a little—class sympathy comes up—English public school & university makes a common bond. Perhaps my frank and reckless attitude yesterday admitting the text of my speeches, seditious etc. also produced an effect. And yet it is quite inconceivable that he could have made me the offer he did without the instigation of the Bengal Govt. or the Governor. I am too big a prize to be left to Magistrates. Any assurance from me would of course have been a tremendous feather in his cap as well as that of the Govt.

Why then should the Bengal Govt. desire this—and try to avoid having me sentenced? They are too much used to meek submission and a defiant attitude hurts. It shows that physical might is after all not everything. It has its limitations. If it cannot down a single man, much less can it suppress a cause or an idea. Obviously they felt that I was better out than in, so far as they were concerned. And they were right. And yet many of our colleagues, both in Bengal & the U.P., and especially in Bengal, think otherwise. How weak our chief workers have grown, and how they hide their weaknesses behind Leninian formulas without understanding them! They neither understand Gandhi nor Lenin, nor have the courage that laughs at difficulties.

The more I think of it the happier I feel that I have been arrested in Bengal. I am sure my arrest will not be in vain.

There is just one regret. I wish I had visited the rural areas of Allahabad at least once. It seems almost like disloyalty to Lal Bahadur, Feroze, Shiva Murti, Shukla & others to keep away from the district after they have gone. I am afraid no important person will follow them.

I am told Sunderlal spoke very well at the impromptu meeting at Allahabad on the 13th. Even Ghani was moved. Ghani, by the way, has gone to Santiniketan on probation.



On my way to court today we passed machine guns, armoured cars, lorries full of soldiers, & troops on the march. I do not know what they were all up to. How ugly an armoured car is! It reminds one of the prehistoric monsters. The tank is worse.

I have written another letter to Kamala & sent it on to the Supt. I do not know if it will be sent. Tonight is my last night in this jail. Tomorrow I change prison and go to Alipore Central Prison, which is almost next door. It is a newer affair. The Presidency jail is said to be the oldest jail in Bengal.

I have been getting *The Statesman* for the last 2 days. The tremendous civil war in Vienna<sup>16</sup> has been a shock. War, revolution, death, destruction all round! Every country on the verge. What will happen to the world? What to India? What a brave fight they put up in Vienna against the massed forces & artillery of Govt. And we talk loudly of our sacrifices here!

Much is going to happen during the 2 years of my sentence and I shall merely be a distant onlooker of great deeds—Will I merely be an onlooker all this time? I doubt it....

23.2.34

My books and papers were kept in the Alipore jail office when I came here. For several days they were not given to me and so I could not write my impressions. I have now been given books (five is the maximum allowed including dictionaries etc.) and one notebook. Also as a special favour, I suppose, this diary.

On the 17th Feb. I was brought from Presidency jail to Alipore Central Jail in a taxi with one sergeant or European warder accompanying me. It was pleasant to come in a taxi, normally, and not in the prisoners' lorry. Upadhyaya was at the gate.

I had been told by many persons that Alipore would be a much better place. Companions etc. I was not however exactly enchanted by my new cell and yard. The cell is about 10 x 11 ft. as in the Presidency. The yard is a much smaller affair. It is an irregular shape—the longest diagonal being about 25 steps. It is all *pucca* and looks clean—but so bare and barren and cheerless. No flowers or greenery as I had at the Presidency. There are four cells with a verandah in front. Single storey. The wall round the yard is low—about

16. In February 1934, Chancellor Dollfuss of Austria attacked the residential areas of the socialists, crushed them after five days of civil war and promulgated a virtually fascist constitution.



7 ft. and, looking over it, a strange sight confronts one. All manner of odd buildings—single storey, double storey, round, rectangular, curious roofings—rise all round, some overtopping the others. It seems that these structures had been fitted in anyhow to take advantage of all the available space—They had grown. Almost it looked like a jig-saw puzzle, or a futurist attempt at the fantastic. And yet I was told that all this was built very methodically with a central tower (which is a church!) in the centre and radiating lines. The area covered by the jail is not much but its population is nearly 2000 and so it is very crowded.

An oppressive and terrifying sight greeted me—adjoining my yard, both in front and to the right, two chimneys belched out black smoke and sometimes the wind carried this right into my cell. These were the chimneys of two kitchens—the 2nd Div. kitchen and the European kitchen.

I was the only resident of the yard. So it was solitary confinement. A boy convict was sent to serve me. We do not understand each other easily but we get on. He is a most innocent-looking youth—Has got 6 months for some riot. Can't conceive of him rioting!

I felt rather lonely especially as the evening drew near. The sight of the new moon, 3 or 4 days old, cheered me like that of an old friend. Then appeared the Dog Star and some others gradually became visible. But time for lock-up had come—6-30 p.m. and I entered my shell. One disadvantage of these early lock-ups—I can hardly see the stars. As they come out I go in.

The night was disturbed with the frequent tramping of the night guards and at 3 a.m. there was a great din—The kitchens had begun functioning! This is a daily or nightly occurrence.

At 6-30 we get locked up and the lights go out at 10 p.m. The long evenings are not frightfully exciting. I think of people in great cities complaining of boredom in the evenings and trying frantically to find amusement. How would they fare here?

The Supt. has sent a 2nd Div. convict—Suren Ghosh (not a political—he was a chief railway booking clerk—and was sentenced for embezzlement) to keep me company in this yard. He is in charge of the 2nd Div. kitchens. Not much real company but even he is welcome.

I was surprised to find that daily newspapers are not allowed to Div. I people—only the weekly *Statesman*. Fortunately the Supt. lets me have my foreign periodicals.

Newspapers and slips of paper are considered most dangerous commodities here. Daily searches are supposed to take place—I suppose because of fear of the 'terrorists having arms'....



*Sarkar salaam* flourishes here, and I suppose in all Bengal jails. I have not seen the way it is done but voices reach me daily over the wall — *sarkar.....salaam...*

The C Class (3rd Div.) food seems to be quite good. Rice or *chapathies*, dal and vegetables. On alternate days some fish. Also sometimes meat. In the morning लपसी,<sup>17</sup> a mixture of dal and rice or gram and *gur*—aluminium *thalis* and *katoras* provided as to Div. II etc.

I have been doing Muller's exercise morning and evening. Am anxiously looking forward to reducing my tummy.

Supt. told me of hunger strike of Div. III politicals (so-called terrorists). This began on 14th Feb. Nalinidas (co-accused of Dinesh Mazumdar) leader.<sup>18</sup> Many others joined. Now 19, including one T.B. patient. Also some troubles with Div II politicals over wearing of jail cap, which is a new innovation.

27.2.34

I have been getting rather stale and bored. It takes a little time to settle down and adapt oneself to jail—and especially to a new gaol in a different province. I do not sleep enough at night—too much noise and disturbance. So I sleep a little in the day time and usually have a nightmare, or a daymare!, and am far from refreshed. Perhaps it is the climate, perhaps a certain blankness about the future. Partly it is the hunger strike that is going on and spreading.

The new ways and restrictions here irritate me. And yet people are decent enough.

I have been expecting a letter from Kamala but it has not come.

This evening I felt more cheerful. The *Living Age*, foreign paper, came. I had a busy talk with the Supt. about nothing in particular. My fellow convict here tells me that the papers say that I am likely to be sent away for another case to the U.P.—hardly likely—but the idea of going to a U.P. prison agreeable. Without fully realising it, I have been wanting this to happen. There will be some trees and green patches to be seen there—not merely the brick and cement of this jail. How little things change one's mood in prison! A fortnight since my arrest.

17. *Lapsi*.

18. Implicated in the Dalhousie Bomb Case in 1930; in March 1933 they were arrested in connection with the murder of the police commissioner of Chandernagore. Nalinidas was transported to Andamans on a life sentence; Dinesh Mazumdar was executed on 9 June 1934.



I am tired with so much writing of closely written sheets. The I.G. is said to have come today to see the hunger-strikers. An unusual and slightly exciting day because of the meeting.

1.3.34<sup>19</sup>

Betty darling,

I have changed my abode and shifted from the Presidency jail to its cousin and neighbour of Alipore. And presumably I remain here for a lengthy period. *J'y suis, J'y reste.*<sup>20</sup> There is apparently no question of my being sent elsewhere.

Of course you can come and have an interview with me whenever you feel like—subject to the jail rules of course. Interviews are fortnightly as in the U.P. and so are letters. When you intend coming this way, fix it up with Kamala. Probably she will be coming here soon for her treatment and is likely to remain in Calcutta for a month or two. Any letters for me should also be sent to her, and not to me direct.

I shall read a lot here for indeed there is little else to do—just to read and think and go through the day's routine. And so when I come out—and that is a long way off—I may be a little wiser than I am. Perhaps and perhaps not. Wisdom is a very elusive thing and difficult to seize. And yet sometimes it comes suddenly and unawares. Meanwhile, I shall be a faithful votary and seek her goodwill. Some day she may show me favour. Anyway, jail is not an unsuitable place to woo her. The hurly-burly of life seems far off and does not distract and it is good to see life of everyday from a little distance, detached.

In your new experience of married life you will also view life from another angle and gain wisdom thereby. But wisdom comes often at the cost of so much, so many years that slip by and do not return. Those who have had the advantage of prison experience know at least the value of patience, and if they have profited by their experience, they have learnt adaptability, and that is a great thing.

I suppose Fory is now going the round of the numerous relatives of the clan Nehru. In spite of all goodwill, this will be some task, and I hope she survives it. I wonder when I shall see her. Perhaps not till she too has formally joined the clan. It seems to me that Birju Bhai and Birju Bhabi are trying to envelop and enwrap her too much, in

19. *Nehru's Letters to His Sister*, (London, 1963), pp. 41-42.

20. Here I am, here I stay.



their desire to make her one of themselves. There can be too much of this kind of thing. Overmuch aggressive kindness and affection begins to cloy and a touch of casualness is useful. But of course, that depends on the person concerned and I do not know Fory. Personally, I am a believer in restraint in such matters.

My love to Raja and yourself and keep cheerful. When I come out and visit Bombay you will have to put me up in your new home. So be prepared for it. I am giving you fair notice!

Your loving brother,  
Jawahar

March 1, 1934<sup>21</sup>

*Indu mein aisee,*

So you have had your first examination and must be feeling tremendously relieved. But then the other one hovers in the distance and perhaps worries you a little. These first examinations are troublesome little things, simply because one is not used to them. There is really nothing much in them but it is quite natural for one to feel a little nervous about them. I hope that after your first experience this nervous feeling has worn away to some extent and you do not worry. Take it quietly and you are bound to do well.

The line of work I have chosen for myself in life is such that I can never settle down safely into a rut. Always I have to face novel situations and I have frequently the sensation of appearing repeatedly at the examinations that life has a way of thrusting on us. They come suddenly and there is no course laid down which one can prepare! And life has become for me a long succession of tests. Sometimes I succeed and sometimes I am not so successful. But the curious thing is that the final and real judge of this success or failure is oneself. Others, of course, pass their opinions on it, and often they praise when there is little to praise, and often they condemn or are indifferent when a real victory has been won. But in one's heart one knows, or ought to know, the real measure of success or failure. What occurs on the surface is not so important, and those who have to face life's tests develop restraint in expression, for they do not wish to give themselves away. Indeed all our education and training teach us some form or other of restraint. We can have little regard for those weaklings who get buffeted about hither and thither and have no control over themselves.

21. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



What a bad habit I have got into! I have allowed myself to muse and philosophize. That shows that at any rate I have not got much self-restraint! But the subject of examinations set me thinking and all life seemed to me an examination—a stiff one which few succeed in.

So now you must be preparing for your next effort six weeks hence. And then you will come to see me, I hope, about the end of April, and have a good holiday (not with me!) which you will have earned. It is delightful to have rest after hard work. Where you will go for your holiday I do not know. Perhaps mummie will have finished her treatment here by then. I have asked her to come here for it immediately and she may remain here for a month or two. You can then go off with mummie to some odd corner. And afterwards? We shall talk of that when we meet.

I was interested to learn of Goshiben's dream. Give her my love and tell her to dream of better and more useful things than my arrest.

Do not write to me direct. Send your letters to mummie and she will enclose them with hers. If you write soon on getting this, you will be in time for the next lot.

Give my love to the Vakils. Today is *Holi*!

Love and kisses from

Your loving  
Papu

8th March 1934

(Shri & Chander Handoo at 5 p.m.—an extra interview unasked)

Interviews with Lado Bhabi, Chander, Rup & Chand—half an hour—Good to see them. And yet I was slightly depressed afterwards. For last two days I have been worried about Kamala's health and often my mind has travelled to her. No satisfactory news yet. Why does she not come here?

9th March 1934

I have felt flat & stale today. Not an unusual feeling in prison! It is raining and that is a change.

The detailed account of the Austrian bloodshed has depressed me. What an awful and bloody place this world is and how barbarous is man when he wants to protect his vested interests.

Locks & bars and walls. Locks & locks and locks. There are four solid locks between me (and every other prisoner) and the fresh air outside the prison. How I shall hate all locks in future.

13th March 1934

I have no trees in my yard—no greenery of any kind except some pots the Supt. has sent me. But there are some trees in other yards and I can see their tops, especially one which adjoins my yard. All these trees were bare and barren of leaf or flower when I came. A week ago I was startled to find little bits of green peeping out all over them. Leaves were coming out of the buds. It was a gay and cheering sight with a touch of mystery in it. And now the leaves are grown up and their pleasant green is delightful to the eye. How sudden is the change from bud to leaf and how wonderful!

15th March 1934

Weight—135 lbs. Drop of 3 lbs. since 2/3 and 5½ since 17/2.

I have been rather conceited about my eye sight. But today doubts began to assail me. My eyes got tired repeatedly after a bit of reading and I developed a slight headache. Does this mean spectacles? Awful prospect!

No letter from Kamala yet.

16th March

(Day for sending letter to office).

Today was or is *nauroz*. I forgot about it although I had received the new *kurta* and *dhoti* yesterday. I remembered suddenly in the afternoon. So the *nauroz* went by without my putting on new clothes for the first time for many years.

One innovation today—a good beginning for the new year. This evening I was told that the Supt. has said that I can go out of my yard every morning & evening for a little walk outside. So I went out this evening. There is no decent place to walk about in. A few flowers here & there and mostly red brick buildings. Still it was a very pleasant change.

Still no letter from K.

18th March

There is a yard in this jail known and referred to both by the staff and the prisoners, as the 'Bomb Yard'.

Conspiracy case prisoners were kept there and perhaps are still kept there.



'Search, search and yet again search' might well be the motto of Bengal jails. The amount of searching that goes on here is prodigious. The conspiracy case under-trials are personally searched thoroughly four times a day, when they go to court, twice by the jail people on coming and going and twice by the police outside. Then there are daily searches in the barracks. Even ordinary prisoners are searched repeatedly every day.

21st March 1934

Got a telegram from Shammi at 2 in the afternoon to say that Shama Bhai had expired yesterday after a second stroke of paralysis. Only two days ago I read in Kamala's letter he was well now and had visited Anand Bhawan and even climbed up stairs. Felt rather shaken up at the news. All kinds of memories, and a feeling of helplessness and weariness. The old family in bits and how changed. Mother must have had a great shock and so also Kamala. She had grown very fond of him. Heigh ho!

22nd March 1934

A little storm in a tea cup last evening because I happened to go inside the kitchen when I went out for my evening walk!

Supt. told me that Kamala & mother were to have come to Calcutta this morning but owing to Shama Bhai's death they have postponed their departure from Allahabad.

My letter to K. only posted today—2 days late.

No book left (barring the German Grammar!) except a novel by Rider Haggard<sup>22</sup> from the jail library—I tried to read it, got disgusted and hurled it away. Later having nothing to do again tried it and again hurled it back! This process has been repeated four or five times.

28th March 1934

J.S. Barnes<sup>23</sup>—Reuter's new representative to India has sent me a letter. Wants to have an interview. Has also written to the Supt. &

22. Sir Henry Rider Haggard (1856-1925); writer of popular novels including *King Solomon's Mines* and *She*.

23. Barnes was a theorist of fascism and his declared purpose in seeing Jawaharlal was "to convert him from communism and disloyalty to the crown and persuade him to adopt a different frame of mind and attitude towards government".

told him that he has already taken permission from the Home Member, the Commissioner of Police and a few others! He tries to be very friendly in his letter to me—Cambridge—Lord's etc., same age & so on. Seems to have been afraid that I may refuse to see him.

The Supt. seldom comes to me, not even once a week. But he passes in front of my yard at least twice a day. The shouts of *sarkar salaam* announce him, and over the wall I can just see the huge white umbrella of state under which he waddles.

March 30, 1934<sup>24</sup>

Darling Indu boy,

I have not had a letter from you for about six weeks. I suppose you have been well occupied with your work and other things. Some news of you has come to me from other people and I am glad to know that you are keeping well. Soon you will have your examination and I am sure you will do well in it and deserve a good holiday. Will you let me know the dates of your examination and when it will be over? When does the result come out? *Chhoti puphi* wrote to me that she wanted you to stay with her for a week after the exam. Of course you could do so if you liked. But there is another proposal which I want you to think over. *Bari puphi* and *Ranjit pupha* and the children are going to Kashmir at the beginning of May for six weeks and they suggest that you might accompany them.

Kashmir is a place well worth visiting and as you know it is our old homeland and has a special claim on us. Long, long ago we left it and since then the whole of India has been our home. But the little corner of India which is Kashmir draws us still both by its beauty and its old associations. We have not been there for seventeen years or more and you have not been there at all. It is worth visiting when you have the chance. I should have liked mummie and you both to go there but I do not know if she will agree as this will mean leaving Dolamma by herself. If you decide to go with *puphi*, you had better come away from Bombay as soon as the examination is over. There will be time for you to spend a week with *chhoti puphi* then. You will first go to Allahabad and have a look at your old room—I am told it has developed cracks in the ceiling—and meet people there. Especially you have to visit *Ummi chachi*. Then you can come to Calcutta for a little peep at your old Papu. Mummie and Dolamma are likely to be here

24. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



then also and you should spend some days with them. We shall also have to fix up about the future.

I heard of your appearance at the show<sup>25</sup> at the Royal Opera House. Girdhari Lal has sent me a newspaper cutting containing a picture. I am told there was quite a lot about it in the press.

I had an interview a few days ago with *bari puphi*, Bijju *chachi* and Fory. I liked Fory. She seemed to me a bright and lovable little girl.

Give my love to *chhoti puphi* and Raja when you see them.

All my love,

Your loving  
Bapu

4th April

To interview J.S. Barnes of Reuter's at 4 p.m.

Had a long interview with Barnes. He is an admirer of fascism and we discussed this and other world problems for long. Seems rather naive & simple in his economic theories. But our talk was friendly.

Finished Tolstoy's *War & Peace* today. An amazing book. Parts of it haunted me and I woke up in the middle of the night thinking of them.

9th April 1934

Interview with Kamala at last today. Upadhyaya also present. She arrived with mother yesterday. Both staying in Seva Sadan. Kamala looked fairly well. Felt greatly cheered at seeing her. I am much too fond of her!

The flowers she brought not allowed. (They were allowed in the next day!)

13th April 1934

I read in the weekly *Statesman* today Bapu's statement about the withdrawal of C.D.<sup>26</sup> I had heard of this before—from Kamala & the Supt.

25. In the spring festival dance in Tagore's drama *Phalguni*, on 10 March 1934.

26. "I must advise all Congressmen to suspend civil resistance for Swaraj as distinguished from specific grievances. They should leave it to me alone. It should be resumed by others in my lifetime only under my direction, unless one arises claiming to know the science better than I do and inspires confidence." The statement, released at Patna on 7 April 1934, was written by Mahatma Gandhi on 2 April 1934.

—but had no idea of the text. The reading of it bowled me over. I have spent an unhappy day feeling rather lost. I read & re-read it.

It marks an epoch not only in our freedom struggle but in my personal life. After 15 years I go my way, perhaps a solitary way leading not far—But meanwhile there is prison and its lonely existence.

And so good-bye to this little book which has kept me company for a year in 2 prisons.

21st April 1934

Interview with Muriel Lester.<sup>27</sup> She was on her way from China & Japan and America—a world tour.

Interview also with mother & Kamala (and Upadhyaya). Mother was brought in an invalid chair from the car. A doctor came with her. She looked very old and weak—at least 10 years older than she is.

27th April 1934

Last night I felt something crawling on my foot as I lay in bed at about 1 a.m. I pressed the torch and saw some kind of a centipede on the bed. I vaulted out of bed with amazing rapidity. I chased the brute about but ultimately it escaped me and disappeared. Not knowing where it was I spent a very uncomfortable time till the morning. This morning a thorough washing and cleansing and airing of cell etc....

April 27, 1934<sup>28</sup>

TO A.K. CHANDA

My dear Chanda,

When we were in Santiniketan, my wife and I, last January, I mentioned to Gurudev the possibility of my daughter Indira joining Santiniketan.<sup>29</sup> Since then I have not had the chance of meeting Indira. She has now just come from Bombay after appearing for the Matriculation examination there and I hope to see her soon. We have now to decide about her future education. We have no desire whatever to send her to the official universities. I dislike them greatly. I had

27. Founder of Kingsley Hall, a welfare workers settlement in the East End, London, where Mahatma Gandhi stayed during his visit to London in 1931.

28. *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, (1963-64, Vol. 29), pp. 145-146.

29. Indira Nehru was in Santiniketan from July 1934 to April 1935.



intended sending her to Europe, probably Switzerland, but events have a way of taking the initiative out of our hands, and for the last many years we have lived, in many ways, a hand to mouth existence, finding it difficult to plan out the future. My repeated and frequent visits to prison disturb domestic arrangements. There is much to be said for this of course as it prevents our falling into grooves.

The result of all this is that we hop along merrily from day to day not knowing what the morrow will bring. So far as Indira's education is concerned there is no chance of her going to Europe in the near future. For the present therefore arrangements have to be made for a year or so at least, and perhaps for more, and I should like her to go to Santiniketan. I shall discuss this with her when I see her, for of course decisions must not be imposed on the modern girl! I should like you to tell me what steps I have to take, what formalities to go through to have her join Santiniketan. When does your next term begin? Is that the commencement of the academic year? I presume she will join the university section.

As to her subjects etc. I shall write to you after I have had a talk with her. She must choose. She may even choose them after she goes there. My own ideas of education are rather peculiar. I dislike the education which prepares a girl to play a part in the drawing room and nowhere else. Personally, if I had the chance I would like to have my daughter work in a factory for a year, just as any other worker, as a part of her education. But this I think is quite impossible at present in India. Could you send me (or rather send my wife at the Seva Sadan) a prospectus of the university? Also the necessary forms of admission etc. and information as to whom they are to be sent. Indira is just about 16½ years old at present.

I should have liked her to visit Santiniketan for a day as she is in Calcutta now. But I do not know if your vacations have begun or not. If you happen to be in Calcutta do send for her and present her to Gurudev. My wife is undergoing treatment at the Seva Sadan, 148 Russa Road, and she will be unable to go to Santiniketan, but you are still there and Indira might go accompanied by Upadhyaya.

Please send your reply to my wife who will forward it on to me. Have you managed to get on with Ghani? Is he doing fairly well?

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

28th April 1934

Amazement! Read in the *Nation* of 4.4.34 that 'among the distinguished writers whose work the *Nation* will publish during the coming year are—J. Nehru—etc.!' The editor seems to be both a prophet and an optimist for during the 'coming year' I ought to be in prison. The announcement made without any reference to me.

5th May 1934

Interview with mother, Kamala and Indu. My last interview here, so the Supt. told me, for I am likely to be transferred soon.

Mother looking better. She has certainly improved by the treatment here. But Kamala looked thoroughly washed out. She has been deteriorating in spite of all manner of injections etc. I feel rather upset about her. I am sure I could pull her round and make her much healthier if I could be with her. But that is not to be for a long time!

7th May 1934

I am to be sent from this jail today, or so it appears. The Supt. said good-bye to me this morning. He did not definitely say that I was to leave today, but I guess it is so. Wrote to Kamala—Indu—Bidhan.

Good-bye to Alipore Jail. Leave it at 9 p.m.

We reached Howrah station over an hour before the departure of the train to find that no reservation had been made! The police had expected the jail people to do so & the jail relied on the police. However the police & the station staff managed to get a second class compartment by asking an occupant to get out of it!...

The crowds at the station were interesting after 3 months of seclusion. Big railway stations are always fascinating. And the drive in an open taxi from Alipur to Howrah was delightful.

8th May 1934

In train.

At Lucknow station met Mohanlal Saksena, Madan—Dhanraj<sup>30</sup> & Nan, Kailas & many others.

30. Shrimati Dhanraj Bakshi, a close friend of the Nehrus.



*May 9th Wednesday*

Get off at Harawala

I am put in the old cattle shed of the jail—cleaned up, whitewashed & repaired. Also fitted up with electric light. Quite a decent place but! The 10 ft. wall has been raised to 14 ft. or so and I have no view of the hills. I can only see a few tree tops.

The new Supt.—A Rai Bahadur chap—crawls in with many apologies. An embodiment of fright, fear of the I.G., fear of me.

I get to know casually that I am not going to have many of the privileges that I have previously had. I can't go outside my little barrack at any time. No walking outside as I used to. No keeping of more books than the regulation 6 at a time. &c. &c. Also no smoking as at Alipur. The effect of all this is to irritate me greatly and some of this irritation flows out to the Supt. I feel a little sorry for him afterwards, but why be sorry for worms.

The various jail officials obliging & try to please. But the recent visit of Palmer the I.G. has evidently frightened them & left them little choice. The R.B. (Supt.) even expected me to be locked up at night in my cell although this is not done in the U.P. after April 1st.

*May 10th Thursday*

Feel a little better today. But rather listless and disinclined to exercise. At Alipur I walked a measured 6 miles a day—3 in the morning, 3 in the evening. Here one can't walk up & down for long in a 50 foot barrack & stare at the walls.

*May 12, Saturday*

I have felt poorly, was feverish today. Haven't settled down here yet. Various unexpected restrictions have upset me. Not being able to go out of my tiny yard of 50 x 20 ft. or so, with its high walls, is a trying ordeal. Can't stretch my legs. Walking up and down the yard is far from exhilarating.

Still in many ways I am far better off than at Alipur. And it is much cooler.

I read the full text of Bapu's statement suspending C.D. It upset me again. The whole argument is most irritating. Not that I mind so much the suspension but the way it has been brought about & the reasons given are amazing. How can one work with Bapu if he functions in this way & leaves people in the lurch?

An article by Horace Alexander on *India* in the N.S. also most annoying.<sup>31</sup> These are the 'friends of India'. Heaven preserve us from them!

May 13, Sunday

I have seldom felt quite so lonely and cut off from the world as I have felt here. It is solitary confinement with a vengeance. Last year I was alone for nine months here but I went out in the mornings & evenings, and saw the trees & flowers & the horizon and people in the distance going up & down the public road. Even in the Alipur jail there was noise & bustle & many prisoners moving about to be seen when I had my morning & evening walks under the main wall. I could stretch my legs & neck & the eyes saw some variety although this variety itself was monotonous & much the same everyday. Here I see only the high walls & the warders. The jail officials visit me for a minute or two daily.

There is one old friend whom I cannot see but can hear. This is the Indian cuckoo, the brain fever bird.

There was a pleasant incident today. I found a tiny baby squirrel crouching in a corner of my cell. Evidently it had gone astray, probably fallen out of its nest. I put it in a little basket in the verandah with the lid on and put some milk with it. A little later I noticed a big squirrel, probably the mother, going about on the rafters of the roof evidently looking for her young one. She came to a nest of mynas and the mynas offered battle and drove her away. Some time later the mother squirrel traced her offspring to the little basket—it was squeaking away. The mother managed to upset the basket and the lid rolled off. Just then the myna came and tried to attack the squirrel. There was a running & retiring tussle between them till the myna retired. The mother squirrel went again to the basket and very carefully got hold of the little one by the mouth and started carrying it away. The myna came again & attacked but the squirrel dodged her and succeeded in reaching a little hole in the wall meant for the drain. And so to freedom. The rescue had been effected! I hope the mother & the baby reached home safely. It was all bravely and cleverly done and I watched the scene fascinated with all my sympathy for the squirrel.

31. In his article published on 14 April 1934, Alexander, while stressing the importance of Gandhi and the need to convene a constituent assembly, had some kind words to say about Irwin and the Liberals.



*May 14, Monday*

I have been in a temper today. I found that the R.B. Supt. has been trying to justify his existence by passing all manner of new orders. The door of my yard is now locked (padlocked) both from inside & outside—two hefty locks! Two locks or one should make little difference and really I don't much care. But what a mentality this displays. Does the fellow think I shall run away? This double locking makes it impossible for one to communicate with the jail office—to send for my books &c.—unless someone happens to come from outside to open the door. I had to wait for some books for several hours today.

There were several other matters which upset me and if the Supt. had come to see me this afternoon (he came in the morning before I knew of the new orders) I would have been very rude to him. I feel a little calmer now having partly exhausted myself on the junior jail officials!

*May 15, Tuesday*

Told the R.B. Supt. a small part of what I thought. All manner of explanations & apologies forthcoming. I am to have an electric bell connecting with the jail gate so that I can communicate with headquarters! This in answer to my complaint that owing to the new double locking of my door—both from inside & outside—I was unable to send a book or get a new book, or get into touch with the jailer when I wanted him. The cage remains double locked but it will be gilded in some ways. It is really extraordinary. Does the fellow really think that I might run away?

The talk with the Supt. relieved me & cooled me. A little outburst may not be good satyagraha but it has its uses.

A bunch of foreign papers & a copy of my *Recent Essays* also came & I was cheered up. Little things make such a difference in prison. A prisoner becomes a bundle of nerves or else sometimes he is reduced to a state of non-feeling.

*May 25, Friday*

Ranjit turned up today. On his way by car to Kashmir. He had left Allahabad on the morning of the 23rd and did not get the Supt.'s telegram but Kamala wired to him to Agra & so he made the diversion to Dehra.

I had a good talk with him but something put me off. The account of Patna &c. for one thing.<sup>32</sup> And then he said that Kamala had decided not to stay in Dehra for part of the summer. She wants to remain in Allahabad and only to come here for interviewing me. She was outwardly well at Patna but the late nights & irregular hours &c. there upset her and she has got back her cough. All this upset me and I felt angry with her for giving up the idea of a Dehra stay. Had a heavy and depressing afternoon.

1.6.34<sup>33</sup>

Betty darling,

Your letter of the 12th May reached me two days ago. Your previous letter also reached me, though long after you wrote it. I am afraid I have been negligent over my letters to you. But somehow, although I have been in prison this time for over three and a half months, I have not quite settled down yet. In Calcutta I was always expecting a transfer. There was little regularity in letters and interviews. The letters from Kamala (with yours) that reached me two days ago came after five weeks. One of my letters to her went astray. On the other hand, I had quite an unusual number of interviews in Calcutta. I had asked Indu to send you a message but I suppose, as is usual with her, she did not do so.

I had an idea at first that you were coming to Calcutta. Then I learnt that probably you would come to Dehra. I do not know what your plans are now. I had suggested (this was the message to Indu) that Raja and you might make a little stay in Dehra on the supposition that Kamala was going to take a house there. But her illness has rather upset matters and now she proposes to remain in Anand Bhawan for most of the time. She may just come to see me when she is a little fitter.

So far as I am concerned I am likely to be a fixture here in Dehra for a long time, as I was in 1932-1933. Indeed, nowhere else in India or outside, have I spent quite such a long time without a change. I am not exactly in the old place but near it. One thing I miss is the sight of the mountains. I cannot see their noble outlines against the sky, or the twinkling lights of Mussoorie, as I used to last year. But I imagine

32. The A.I.C.C. meeting at Patna on 18 and 19 May 1934 endorsed Mahatma Gandhi's statement of 7 April 1934 suspending civil disobedience by individual Congressmen excepting himself. A resolution sponsored by Mahatma Gandhi was passed allowing Congressmen to enter Councils and a Parliamentary Board was constituted under Malaviya and Ansari.

33. *Nehru's Letters to His Sister*, (London, 1963), pp. 43-45.



them and I have a powerful enough imagination! I am keeping fit—it is warm enough here now, but, of course, this cannot be compared to the heat of the plains.

About Toller's book, you have been rather slow! Have you forgotten that I try to be up to date as regards books even in prison? So as soon as I heard of the book in Calcutta I tried to get it. Not getting it locally, I had it ordered from England. All this was before your previous letter came. The order had already gone when I knew that you had it. The book came a few days back and I read it yesterday. It is a strangely moving book and Toller is such a lovable creature. A little before my arrest I had a letter from him (in answer to mine).

You must be shifting today to your new flat in Warden Road.

Love to Raja and yourself.

Do you know Nanu's latest address? He was in great difficulties and had been driven out of Germany by the Hitlerites. He was in Prague. I should like to do something for him, if possible.

Your loving brother,  
Jawahar

*June 3, Sunday*

I am definitely below par, physically & mentally. For many days have been feeling very depressed & poorly. This little yard with its high walls is irritating and so flat & stale. Once a fortnight I go to the jail office to be weighed and this means a little outing from the yard and a walk of fifty yards or so in the fresh air outside. What a change it is! There is freshness & fragrance, & the cool smell of grass & soft earth, and distant vistas.

I suppose it is this close confinement that affects the nerves. And then when any news comes in letters or newspapers that I do not like it upsets me far more than it should. Kamala is again in the grip of her old disease and this news has oppressed me. Indu does not write to me and I get very angry. So during the last few days I have been full of irritation against Kamala & Indu & the world generally. Curious when one is in a bad mood how one finds excuses for it and picks at otherwise trivial matters in the past. It is not Kamala's fault that she is again laid up. What is the poor girl to do? But this means that I shall be lonelier here than ever. And my mind goes back to all the petty grievances I have had against her in the past and dwells on them and this increases my ill-humour. I fight against this with little success while it lasts. Gradually it goes away. If I have to write a letter during this fit of ill-humour the letter is bound to be



a harsh and unfriendly one. I wrote yesterday to Kamala & others. I had not quite recovered and in spite of all my efforts my letter was harsh and I am afraid will pain her.

Indu has passed her exam and must be excited and expecting congratulations & the like. Instead I have not even written to her!...

Back of all this in my mind I suppose is dissatisfaction at the political situation and this finds its way out in domestic entanglements & worries which I would hardly notice otherwise.

Last night I lay awake for hours—a most unusual occurrence. I could not go to sleep and was in considerable discomfort.

4th June 1934

Hallowes, the Supt. of the Dun, visited me. Reminded me of the correspondence we had about famine relief when he was D.M. of Gonda.<sup>34</sup>

ग्राज In and Out of Prison लिखना शुरू किया।<sup>35</sup>

15.6.1934<sup>36</sup>

Indu darling,

I was glad to receive your letter after a long time.

About Vakil's suggestion that you might take Soniben's cottage at Santiniketan and set up a separate establishment there with a cook etc., I am afraid I do not agree at all. I dislike very much the idea of your keeping apart from the 'common herd' and requiring all manner of special attention, just as the Prince of Wales does when he goes to school or college. This seems to me to savour of vulgarity and snobbery. It is a bad beginning to make in any place to shout out to the people there that they are inferior beings and you are a superior person requiring special and particular treatment. Do you think any self-respecting boy or girl would care to make friends with you under these circumstances? And what would the teachers and professors, who run the college there, feel? Would they not feel that they had been insulted to some extent by our having made our own arrangements over their heads? No, this kind of thing will never do. Wherever we go we must keep on a level with our surroundings and not imagine that we are better or superior. It is better not to go to a place than to go as a superior

34. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 103-105.

35. Today started writing *In and Out of Prison*. [Published as *Autobiography* in April 1936.]

36. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



person. If you ever desire to work among village folk or for factory workers, how do you think you would live with them or visit them? As a society lady with a scented handkerchief to keep off the bad smells, occasionally patronising them or doling out charity to them? That is not the way to meet your kind or to do human service. This method of charity and condescension irritates me exceedingly and I have no use for it.

I think I have told you that it has long been my desire that a part of your education—and every boy's and girl's education—should consist of real honest work in a factory or in the fields. Unfortunately this cannot be arranged in India under present conditions but this idea of mine will give you some notion of what I think of education. If you want to work in a factory, do you think you could do so as a superior person living apart and in a much better way than the others? The idea is absurd. The very object of going there is to learn from the sufferings, discomforts and misery which surround and wrap up the great majority of people; to see the drama of real life; to become akin to a small extent at least with the masses; to understand their viewpoint; and to get to know how to work so as to raise them and get them out of their misery. This cannot be done by people who live in cotton wool but by those who can face the sun and the air and hard living. However, all this does not arise at present and much will depend on what ideals in life you have. I cannot impose my ideals on you. If you want to make your life worthwhile you will have to decide for yourself what your life-philosophy should be.

There is no question of any such great decision before you go to Santiniketan. As a matter of fact that is a delightful place and I am sure you will have no physical discomfort there. I think you should stay wherever the college authorities put you. If it is the boarding house, certainly you should remain there. Why shouldn't you? Take the food also as it comes. If it does not agree with you, you can say so to the matron or other friends there and get it changed or added to. There will be no difficulty about this. My fear is that you will be too much looked after there, not too little. That can't be helped because you happen to belong to a notorious family. But you must not put a barrier between yourself and the other students. Many of the girls there are very decent and you will soon be friends with them.

You seem to have an idea that you will have to spend a lot of time in washing clothes! I do not know but I think you are mistaken. A little washing is rather good for one.

Do you know what I had to put up with at Harrow? We never had a full meal at school unless we bought it for ourselves. As junior



boys we had to wait on the seniors as fags, get their food, clean their places up, sometimes clean their boots, carry messages for them etc. and be continually sworn at by them and sometimes beaten.

So I think you had better go to Santiniketan without making any special arrangements. I have already written to them there and they will fix you up. Mummie can accompany you when you first go. There is a young girl there, Mrs. Chanda, the wife of the Poet's secretary, who is a bright little thing and is a good artist. She will help you in every way. There is no question of your falling ill. If anything disagrees with you, say so.

The college opens on July 1st but they have said that you can reach there by July 7th. You should try to do so. This means leaving Allahabad on July 6th at the latest. You should spend a few days in Allahabad before going. Yesterday I had an interview with mummie and she suggested that you should leave Kashmir so as to reach Dehra Dun on June 30th (Saturday). On that day you can have an interview with me and leave for Allahabad the same night. The date for the interview must be definitely fixed as it is just possible that *chhoti puphi* might come on the same day. Or perhaps Fory. If Fory comes she could join you at Lahore.

Two weeks ago I wrote to big *puphi* that you need not take the trouble to come to Dehra Dun on your way back as this would take an extra day and reduce your stay with mummie at Allahabad. Mummie however wants you to come to Dehra and if you feel that way, you can certainly do so.

I am sending you a prospectus of Santiniketan. This will give you a great deal of information. On p. 13 the subjects are given. Among the compulsory subjects, I think, you should choose Hindi (as an Indian language) and French (as a modern language).

There are several interesting optional subjects—the three sciences, botany, physics, chemistry, and music, fine arts etc. You must choose two of these. I am rather partial to science as the modern world is based on science. At the same time the fine art department of Santiniketan is very good and if you have any inclination that way you should join it. You need not decide yet. Go there and see for yourself and then decide.

Do not be prejudiced before you even go to Santiniketan. It has its faults but it has its good points also and I think the latter far outweigh the former. I am sure you can learn a great deal and develop rightly there. After three months there will be the long *pūja* vacations. And remember that the place is easily accessible from Allahabad, at least compared to Poona or Vile Parle. It is practically a night's journey.



I am glad you are enjoying your visit to Kashmir and are growing fond of the place. You will be sorry to come away so soon leaving the others behind. What is a month in Kashmir? But look upon this month as an introduction to the place. Let us hope that later on you can renew the friendship and stay longer.

I hope you have been able to meet some good Kashmiri families—some people besides the *manjhis* etc. I am told that better class Kashmiri women have now all taken to the sari. Only a few years ago they wore the *फिरन*.<sup>37</sup>

I enclose a picture taken from a paper. Is this how you people hike? With little Rita also carrying a rucksack on her back?

My love to all your party and to you.

Your loving  
Papu

June 20, Wednesday

"The Working Committee—is of opinion that confiscation and class war are contrary to the Congress creed of non-violence."<sup>38</sup>

To hell with the Working Committee—passing pious and fatuous resolutions on subjects it does not understand—or perhaps understands too well!

"At the same time the W.C. is of opinion that Congress does contemplate wiser and juster use of private property so as to prevent it from exploiting the landless poor." Gracious of the W.C. & the Congress.

21/6/34<sup>39</sup>

TO THE SUPERINTENDENT, DEHRA DUN JAIL

Dear Mr. Superintendent,

I notice from a report in today's *Statesman* newspaper that the Home Member of the U.P. Government stated in the Provincial Council that I had been allowed a "hand fan".<sup>40</sup> I am grateful to the U.P.

37. *Phiran*, a woollen overall worn by Kashmiri women.

38. The Working Committee resolution on socialism was drafted by Mahatma Gandhi and passed on 18 June 1934.

39. J.N. Prison Papers, N.M.M.L.

40. On 19 June 1934 the Home Member, questioned in the U.P. Council if it were a fact that Jawaharlal Nehru had not been given a fan, replied that he had been allowed a hand fan.

Government for their solicitude for my physical condition during the summer heat and for their generosity in allowing me the use of a "hand fan". I trust you will convey my gratitude to the Home Member. As it happens, however, that I possess such a "hand fan" of my own I have not been able to make use of the "hand fan" you kindly sent me. I am therefore returning it so that the government's generosity might be exercised afresh on another prisoner who may perhaps be in greater need of the "hand fan" than I am.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

*June 25, Monday*

I have been unwell since yesterday. Nothing much but it is troublesome. Pain in the back. Could not turn in bed or get up without great difficulty. Don't know why this has happened. Perhaps a chill, perhaps got a sprain in my stretching exercises.

Ailments in gaol are not at all pleasant. They make the loneliness greater.

It has been raining hard & the monsoon has broken. We have had over 12 inches during the last week. The heat is less but the eyes have no relief. I have to stare all day at the high brick walls. But on the other side of them, I know, lie green fields and trees, bright with colour and glistening with drops of rain. Sometimes for a second or two I have a sudden glimpse of them when the iron door of the yard is opened, and equally suddenly it vanishes—like the flash of lightning. The warders have special instructions not to open the door if I am anywhere near it, and even when they open it, to do so just a little.

Often the door is opened and I do not even look that way. That sight of fresh greenery produces nostalgia—a heart-ache...

*June 26, Tuesday*

The pain is better but it continues.

How old I am getting! My hair is turning grey at a great pace, it is already mostly grey and I have developed quite a distinguished(?) elderly look. The world passes on and goes ahead, while I and so many like me—sit silent and inactive and grow older & older. Life stops in jail in many ways but age creeps on. My eyes grow dull from staring at the walls. They are beginning to sag—like father's.



*June 28, Thursday*

Last night I was sitting reading in the verandah near my bed. I took some books to my cell passing the narrow space between the bed and the wall. On returning the same way I suddenly stopped within two feet of a little snake lying coiled up at the base of the wall opposite my bed. I must have passed it in the first instance, within six inches of it.

The decency of the snake in not attacking me had a favourable effect on me and I sat on my bed for long watching it. The warder came & suggested killing it. I told him to give the poor thing a chance. But it would not take advantage of the chance and only moved about a little in the small verandah. I tried even to push it on with the help of a mosquito net pole—I do not use the net but this bamboo was there—but it would not make an effort to escape. There was only one way in & out from my little yard—a small hole for a drain. It must have come that way.

After nearly an hour another warder came for the night and the time for lights out approached. It was difficult to allow the snake to remain in the yard with two warders, apart from myself. A proposal was again made to put an end to it & I reluctantly agreed. It was stunned—I thought it had died—and I promptly put it in a glass jar. This morning to my surprise I found it very much alive. I tried to feed it with milk. I compared its marks with those on the chart and came to the conclusion that it was a krait, a very poisonous snake. It was about 20 inches long & not fully grown. This evening it died after making violent efforts to get out of the jar. I propose keeping it in spirit.

*June 30 Saturday*

The interview! I expected Indu and perhaps Fory. But to my surprise Kamala turned up with Indu.

Indu looked fairly well but tanned & dark with exposure. She enjoyed her visit to Kashmir.

Kamala full of Allahabad trouble & bickerings. I told her to keep out of them. How our people go to pieces at the least provocation. I am glad I am not out and yet this imprisonment is telling on my nerves. I don't think I have ever before in gaol felt quite so helpless before. Partly no doubt due to the conditions prevailing here. No fresh air or wide outlook as I used to have when I was allowed to go out of my yard last year. A narrow yard with high walls & little possibility of exercise. I get bored with walking up & down, up and down,

17 or 18 steps one way. Then the loneliness. But at the back of all, & overshadowing the rest, is the situation outside & especially Bapu's amazing statements. There was one in today's paper which upset me.<sup>41</sup>

The future, the future—what of the future? It looks dark and I feel weary. There is little 'pep' in me left just at present. The days drag through slowly and reluctantly and I find it difficult to do any solid work.

*July 5, Thursday*

Yesterday there was some commotion in the jail office. Some newspapers had come out with a story of the snake that had visited me, and there were headlines of my 'narrow escape'. A newspaper man wrote to the superintendent asking for confirmation of the news. He had paid no attention to the matter previously. He had not visited me since the snake incident and he had casually heard about it from some jail official. The sudden newspaper publicity upset him. Evidently the papers got hold of the story from Kamala or Indu who saw the snake in the bottle when they came to interview me.

The Supt.'s first reaction was to give vent to his anger against the jail staff (by telephone) for not telling him all the facts. The next morning (yesterday) he came to me, heard my account, & then examined the snake, with the help of the chart, for an hour. He came to me again to prove to me that the snake was not poisonous. Perhaps he was right.

Curiously enough that very night (last night) as I was preparing to go to bed I saw an enormous black scorpion just above my table. I caught him & put him in a bottle and this morning I sent this to the jail office for the Supt.'s edification.

For some days I have had some shoots planted. These were creepers & were sent to me from outside. Yesterday the Supt. had them ruthlessly pulled out! Technically I suppose he was right for creepers are not suitable plants in a prison. But I was much pained at the way the plants were pulled out & slaughtered.

41. Mahatma Gandhi said on 29 June 1934 at Ahmedabad that all labourers were capitalists but did not know how to use their capital intelligently. "I do not wish the destruction of capitalists. In that destruction I visualise our own destruction. What is required is an excellent combination of the two"



July 12, 1934<sup>42</sup>

Indu sweetheart,

I was very glad to receive your letter and have your first impressions of Santiniketan. The letter came with mummie's, only yesterday.

I knew you would like the place and I think your liking will grow with time. Some people dislike it because of various reasons. They are so used to the official universities that anything new strikes them as undesirable; or they don't like the Poet; or they think that too much freedom is given to the students. Curiously enough it is the Bengalis themselves who criticise it most. Bengalis, in spite of being advanced and cultured in many ways, are very conservative folk. The Poet gets very little money for Santiniketan from Bengal. He has to go to Bombay and Gujarat for it!

My own feeling about Santiniketan is that it is a good place with one thing lacking. It does not give quite an up to date education for the modern strenuous life. It concentrates too much on the artistic side. This is of course good in itself but the other departments of life get rather left behind. And this is the great difference between it and the other universities for the latter are absolutely and totally devoid of anything that can be called art. Nor indeed is there any culture there, only a smattering is given for the purpose of passing examinations. Art and culture are very necessary to make a complete man or woman. They not only add to the graces of life but give us a view of life as a whole and prevent us from becoming narrow one-sided persons.

But art and general culture without anything else are apt to make us rather helpless persons in the present-day world. To understand it we have to possess technical knowledge, for the modern world is based on science and technical appliances. No person can call himself educated today unless he or she knows something of science and economics and technology.

It was because of this that I suggested your taking up two science subjects—chemistry and another. I was very glad to learn from you that you had done well in your chemistry paper at Bombay. This shows that you have a bent that way and it is desirable to keep it up. My own subjects at college, as you perhaps know, were scientific ones—chemistry, botany and geology with some physics. Physics is the oldest of sciences, the basic one. Then comes chemistry and then biology



which is popular now. We should know something of all three of these and then we can specialise later.

I suppose it will be possible for you to take two sciences as well as fine art, if you so wish it. You will have some difficulty to begin with about the language—Bengali. But you will soon get over it.

I do not know what your daily programme is. Usually, when one goes from school to college, the actual class time is reduced and more work has to be done by the student by herself. As one goes up in the university more and more work has to be done privately with just an occasional tip from the professor.

I wonder if you have got with you your examination papers of Bombay. If so, I would like you to send them to me by post direct. I should like to see them.

The early rising bell must be a bit of a nuisance. But it all depends on when one goes to bed and one soon gets used to early hours. I get up at about 4.30 every morning. In summer this is very pleasant.

Your journeys from Santiniketan to Allahabad will not be so long as the Poona or Bombay ones. From Burdwan it is just a night's journey. But your ill-luck in travelling seems to have accompanied you as the engine broke down!

If you write to Mr. Vakil, tell him that I liked his poems, especially the one on the Nishat Bagh....

This morning I had an interview with mummie, *chhoti puphi* and Raja Bhai. Mummie gave me some news of you. She told me that you were rather put out at first and wandered about helplessly from place to place finding neither classes nor teachers! Later I understand you were feeling more contented. I hope you have settled down now and have discovered the teachers and the classes. Santiniketan is a strange casual place. One has to shift for oneself and push one's way a little. I learnt that there was no French teacher at present. Is this so? If so, I am sorry. What has happened to the German, who was a Buddhist monk, and who taught French? I think you should definitely ask for French and science teaching and it is up to the authorities there to provide it.

Don't worry yourself about little things that annoy. That is always the first experience in strange and new surroundings. One feels like a square peg in a round hole. Life is like that when we leave the shelter of our homes and friends and the sooner we accommodate ourselves to it the better.

I was interested to learn that there was some talk of your accompanying Gurudev to Palestine next October. Is there any basis in this? October is a long way off yet and we shall see what happens meanwhile.



But it does not seem to me to be a bad idea. What do you think of it? See the world while one has the chance. In later life, the chances do not come often.

Do you ever write to Mlle. Hemmerlin? I think you ought to keep in touch with her. This will be of great help to you if and when you go to Suisse.

Keep smiling, *bien aimee*.

Love from

Your loving  
Papu

July 13, Friday

Great news! The Supt. comes in a state of excitement and tells me that Govt. permits me to go out of my yard for exercise. But—there is a big but!—it is to be every other day! I glance through the I.G.'s letter and find that these words have been added in handscript—probably by the great one himself—in a typewritten letter. I got rather put out and indeed lost my temper a little. Spoke rather wildly about the Govt. & all its works and refused to take advantage of the offer. Felt rather sorry for my language afterwards. It was decided that I should write to the Supt. about offer and my rejection so that he could forward my letter to the I.G.

14.7.34<sup>43</sup>

TO SUPERINTENDENT, DISTRICT JAIL, DEHRA DUN

Dear Sir,

You were good enough to inform me yesterday that the local government has issued orders permitting me to have half an hour's exercise outside my enclosure "every other day". Any relaxation of confinement, especially such as leads to fresh air and exercise, must of necessity be welcome to a prisoner, and I would request you to convey to the local government my gratitude for the solicitude they have shown for my physical and mental well-being. But I feel that they have acted under some misapprehension. The direction that I should have the fresh air and exercise "every other day" must have been based on an assumption that I differ on alternate days, perhaps after the fashion of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and that only one part of me

43. J.N. Prison Papers, N.M.M.L.

should be favoured. But I am not aware of possessing a dual personality, or of feeling more virtuous on alternate days.

I regret to say that considerable experience of living in solitude, cut off from human companionship, like the early Christian hermits as well as unlike them, cut off from nature and fresh air, has not, to my knowledge, increased my stock of virtue. And such virtue as I possess is evenly divided over me both in point of time and space. I feel therefore that it will be difficult for me to fit in with the proposed arrangement for "every other day". I have also not been accustomed so far to taking exercise on alternate days and I imagine that this can only interfere with the day's routine. It may also result, perhaps, in adding to the burdens of the gaol staff by requiring them to keep a register, or at least some kind of note, of the days when I may take exercise and the days when I may not.

Under these circumstances, I feel that it will be better for me not to take advantage of the new directions of the government about my taking exercise on alternate days, and I shall be obliged if you will kindly convey this information to the authorities concerned.

Yours faithfully,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

*July 15, Sunday*

Last evening, as I was reading, I felt very tired and sleepy. No special reason for it. It was only 8.30 and too early to retire. I struggled on till about 9 and then found it impossible to carry on. Felt so sleepy that I could hardly get up to put out the lights or wind my watch &c. The putting out of the lights means taking out the bulbs from their sockets, there being no switches inside. The switch is outside my yard and is supposed to be turned off at 10 p.m.

I have hardly ever felt so sleepy in my life. It almost seemed as if I was drugged! I fell asleep and about an hour and a half later I woke up with a start. The two warders were asking me what the matter was. I had been shouting in my sleep. I had had a nightmare & it was vivid enough when I woke but now I have almost forgotten it. But I still remember that it ended with someone trying to strangle me and my yelling out.

Sometimes, even at home I have mumbled in my sleep, sometimes shouted a little. But this time apparently I shouted more vigorously. Nothing wrong with me inside—no indigestion. The book I was reading when I fell asleep was Aldous Huxley's Mexican travel diary.

I feel tired out today. Took no exercise.



July 23, Monday

The magisterial visitation today, but instead of Hallowes the District Magistrate, his assistant the Joint Magistrate one Lobo Prabhu(?)<sup>44</sup> came..... Argued with me for over an hour. Foolishly I entered into an argument but he was absolutely impervious to any ideas except his own, which centred round the I.C.S. being the finest collection of human beings on earth—the British Empire a wonderful & beneficent affair—was it not better than any empire of the past e.g. the Roman Empire, Chengiz Khan's & Timur's? Amazing to find people of this kind still—and an Indian! I was greatly irritated and said many hard things. I wish I had refused to argue with him.

The Supt. is a thorough coward. He cows down to every I.C.S. man. Prabhu lords it over him.

July 27, 1934<sup>45</sup>

Darling Indu,

Your letter came a few days ago. I am very glad you are settling down and gradually fitting in with life there. You will pick up Bengali soon enough to carry on.

I think you have done well to take chemistry instead of logic. It is true that one science by itself is somewhat out of place but no science would have been worse. It is my belief that a person who does not know something about science is incomplete in the modern world. All your subjects are interesting and, if the teaching is good, you should soon be absorbed in them. But you have not mentioned French. What about it? It would be a pity if you cannot keep this up for this would mean your forgetting the little you know. And further it would mean trouble when you go to Europe.

I suppose your various subjects will keep you pretty well occupied. If you have any leisure and wish to read books outside your course, I can suggest some to you, or even send them.

What about exercises? You do not mention any. Don't become like the much-too-lady-like Bengali girls who are so delicate and willowy and incapable of hard exercise. If you can't get anything else have a run in the morning....

44. J.M. Lobo Prabhu (b. 1906); retired from I.C.S. in 1959; joined Swatantra Party; editor of *Insight* since 1961.

45. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

We have had a tremendous deal of rain here—56 inches during the last 5 weeks. As in any event I can't go out I do not mind it. Indeed I rather like it.

29-7-34

This morning I had an interview with Dolamma, *puphi* and *pupha*. From them I learnt that mummie was again ill and bed-ridden. I am anxious but what can I do from here?

Let me know what books in history and civics you are reading.

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

Monday, 30 July

Yesterday morning I learnt that mother, Nan & Ranjit had come to interview me. My spirits went up. I felt quite light hearted. Then came the morning paper and I read something that Bapu had said to the Congress Socialists in Benares.<sup>46</sup> This upset me a little—However the interview went off well. Mother looked so frail and shrunk-up. But she could walk a little more than she could 3 months ago in Calcutta.

Kamala was ill again & bed-ridden, I was told, and so could not go to Benares. This filled my mind all yesterday—I was angry and upset because she had taken no precautions & tired herself out at meetings of the wretched Allahabad Congress leaders.

I wrote to her my usual fortnightly letter & this reflected my irate & nervous state of mind. I did my best to tone it down but could not succeed. And my letter is going to reach her day after tomorrow on her birthday—Aug. 1st.

I have not recovered today. It has been a miserable day and I have found it quite impossible to do any work. A completely wasted day.

10th August 1934<sup>47</sup>

Nan darling,

Thank you for the copies of *Letters from a Father* &c. which reached

46. On 27 July 1934 Mahatma Gandhi told a socialist deputation either to stop unwarranted attacks on the Congress executive or to take over the Congress organization.

47. Vijayalakshmi Pandit Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.



me. I am glad the press is waking up. Somehow I am a little doubtful about their assurances. Anyway, I have to put up with them as with many other things I do not approve of.

I want you to ask Upadhyaya to send me the little pamphlet by Horace Alexander on Indian prisons. This used to be on the library table or in one of its drawers. This can come at an interview or by post. Also ask Upadhyaya to get for me the new edition of Gandhiji's *Self-Restraint and Self-Indulgence*. If this is not obtainable in Allahabad, it should be ordered either directly or through a bookseller.

I find I have missed a number of the *Living Age* and I dislike doing so. It is a magazine I value greatly. It appears that there was an article in this number by Harold Laski on me.<sup>48</sup> Naturally I am interested in what Laski has to say on such a subject. If it is possible for Upadhyaya to discover the number, ask him to send it. Probably it is the June number. I have already seen and returned the July number and before that I saw the 90th anniversary number....

About Chand's education it is very difficult for me to advise. I hardly know how Chand has developed during the last few years. I know nothing about Vakil's new school or about Woodstock, except what you have written. And then the real question always is: what are you aiming at? Few people think clearly on this point or even bother themselves about it. It is true that even if they did think the problem out and arrived at certain conclusions, we could not act up to them because of the lack of suitable institutions. We have to live and function under many limitations. There are, to begin with, certain common factors. Proper intellectual and physical growth should be provided for without unnecessary repression or conflict between the teacher and the taught. Character and habit-formation have to be attended to. The company should be suitable and so on and so forth. All this is common ground. But then two vital issues have to be faced: 1. Should the education given be a completely class education separating the pupil and creating a barrier between him or her and the great mass of the people? and 2. What part should the national genius have in the education?

As regards the 1st issue, it is obvious that in a country where education is confined to the top few, inevitably it becomes a class affair

48. Laski wrote: "Swaraj is in his blood... He no longer believes in the *bona fides* of the British raj."

which creates barriers. We can't avoid that, in India especially. But we can try to bring some counter-influences which tone down this unfortunate effect. The ideal class education, of course, is the English public school system.

As for the 2nd issue, I do not mean the teaching of aggressive and blind nationalism. But I do feel that a person who cuts himself off from the cultural genius of the country he lives in, creates a barrier which makes it difficult for him to function there effectively. Even the breaker of old customs must approach his job as an insider, not an outsider. There is a story in a book I have been reading (and which I shall send you soon) about a young and obscure Chinese poet who diffidently approached Li Po,<sup>49</sup> one of the greatest of China's poets, and asked him: "Master! tell me how I may become a great poet!" And Li Po answered him: "First learn the rules of poetry, then break away from them at will."

I realise the value of both these vital points because I have myself suffered, and still suffer, in regard to both of them.

So now I leave you to decide about Chand. I need hardly say that I have a horror of the drawing-room type of education for girls. And I am quite sure that Chand is much too earnest and serious to take to it. Indeed she is perhaps too serious for her age and some attention to games and exercise and the company of others of her age will be good for her. I agree with you that a boarding school is more desirable than a day one. But which boarding school—I am not in a position to say.

Give my love to her and the other children.

Your loving brother,  
Jawahar

Aug. 11th Saturday

I leave Dehra jail under police escort for Allahabad.

#### DRAFT NOTE ON THE CONGRESS PROGRAMME<sup>50</sup>

For the past fifteen years or so it has been my privilege to work under Bapu in the Congress, and although I held clear and definite views

49. Li Tai Po (c 700-762); Chinese poet of the Tang dynasty.

50. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. Presumably written sometime in August 1934, before his release on parole. The draft is incomplete.



about many matters, I tried to subordinate them to what I conceived to be the larger loyalty—the cause of national freedom for which the Congress seemed to be working. I tried to be loyal and faithful to my leader and my colleagues, for in my spiritual make-up, loyalty to a cause and to one's colleagues holds a high place. I fought many a battle within myself when I felt that I was being dragged away from the anchor of my spiritual faith. Somehow I managed to compromise. Perhaps I was wrong for it can never be right for anyone to let go of that anchor. But in the conflict of ideals I clung to my loyalty to my colleagues and hoped that the rush of events and the development of our struggle might dissolve the difficulties that faced me and bring my colleagues nearer to my viewpoint.

It is clear to me now that I was mistaken in this hope and that there is hardly any common ground between me and Bapu and the others who lead the Congress today. Our objectives are different, our ideals are different, our spiritual outlook is different and our methods are likely to be different. It appears that we even understand or interpret the English language differently in so far as it embodies the resolutions of the Congress. "Independence" is almost a forgotten thing so far as our leaders are concerned—a brave plain word submerged under various 'points', interpretations, speeches, safeguards and assurances. That has been the fate of our political ideal.

Those of us who had an economic and social ideal have now been told very rudely that we must shift for ourselves—there is no room for us in the Congress. Of course that resolution of the Working Committee will be interpreted in a variety of ways. Interpretation is our strong point after we have made equivocal statements. Having decried intellect and all its works we seem to have lost the art of clear thinking and clear expression. Our language, like our minds, grows more and more mystical and meaningless.

And yet the meaning is clear enough. It is doubtful if a single member of the Working Committee that passed the resolution has ever given thought to socialism or communism and studied it. But without caring to know what this thing is for which millions have given their lives, instinctively it passed a resolution which might result in driving away the most advanced ranks in the struggle for freedom. The resolution was no doubt passed at the instigation of the Parliamentary Board or its leaders who want to keep on the soft side of the people who have money.

Nobody called the Congress socialist. But it has now ceased to be neutral on the subject. It is aggressively anti-socialist and politically



it is more backward than it has been for fifteen years. Among its leaders are people who have taken no part in our campaign; who in the midst of our struggle have drawn down the flag and tried to sabotage the movement. It welcomes to its ranks people who defied its mandates. It tries to compromise with the communalists though some of these openly side with the government.<sup>51</sup> A secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha publicly approves of the government ban on the Frontier Red Shirts and there is no one to denounce him and his kind. This is what we have come to after all our high ideals and brave talk. Some of us talk of social reforms and religion and superstition, others are openly opportunist. In the latter it is a question of how many carrots for how many donkeys.

We have seen the disgusting antics of the Calcutta Corporation under Congress control.<sup>52</sup> One Congress party there cooperates with the officials and the European group against another Congress party. That party might well be called the Society for the Advancement of Mr. Nalini Ranjan Sarkar.<sup>53</sup> Other parties in Calcutta and elsewhere seek other people's advancement. The whole Congress is now likely to go the way of the Calcutta Corporation.

When I read Bapu's statement recommending withdrawal of civil disobedience I had a great shock; not because of the withdrawal but because of the reasons given and his general outlook. That statement seemed to me to be an insult to the nation, to the Congress and to any person with a grain of intelligence. I felt with a stab of pain that the chords of allegiance that had bound me to him for many years had snapped. For long a mental tussle had been going on within me. Bapu's fasts and his concentration on issues other than the political and civil disobedience issue, his desertion (whatever the reasons) of his comrades in the middle of the struggle, his personal and self-created entanglements which led him to the extraordinary position that—while out of prison he was yet pledged to himself not to take part in the

51. The Working Committee held discussions on 28 and 29 July 1934 with Aney and Malaviya, who had wanted to resign on the Communal Award question, and reiterated that the Congress should reject the Communal Award and grant Hindu members in the Assembly freedom to vote against the Award.
52. N. R. Sarkar was elected mayor on 4 July 1934, defeating Fazlul Huq, with the European members voting on his side.
53. (1888-1953); mayor of Calcutta, 1934; Finance Minister, Government of Bengal, 1938-39 and 1941-42; member, Viceroy's Executive Council, 1942-43; acting Chief Minister, West Bengal, during B. C. Roy's absence in 1949.



civil disobedience movement—all these were fatal kicks at the civil disobedience movement. No doubt the movement was decaying. But for the leader to act in this casual manner was to me an amazing thing. I cannot judge what the Harijan movement has achieved. It has no doubt done much good. It has also certainly done some harm. But the good or bad of the Harijan movement seems to me beside the point. There is such a thing as loyalty to a job undertaken and to one's colleagues in it and it was painful to find that Bapu attached little value to it. He talked of other loyalties, promises, pledges. What of the previous pledge\*\*\*





To Mahatma Gandhi<sup>1</sup>

## ON PAROLE

12 August 1934—23 August 1934

13th August 1934

My dear Bapu,

Thank you for your telegram—we are all happy to think that you have successfully passed through—or will pass through in a few more hours—your latest self-imposed ordeal.<sup>2</sup> My temporary discharge has undoubtedly done good to Kamala. Fundamentally she may not be much better but the psychological effect has been marked and of course this is a great help in her treatment. She has really been continuously ill, more or less, for the last year or so.<sup>3</sup> I am in a peculiar position. On arrival at Allahabad I was met by the district magistrate who told me that the U.P. Government had ordered that I should be permitted to visit my wife and remain with her for two days, and for a longer period if the doctors considered that her condition was still one of serious illness. There were no conditions, he added, only my parole and that I would go back to prison at the end of this period. I told him that I was grateful to the U.P. Government for their courtesy in permitting me to visit my ailing wife but I regretted that I was quite unable to give any undertaking on parole however this might be put. As for going back to prison it was open to them always to take me there. I was not likely to run away or hide myself, nor was I interested in raising legal quibbles. This answer of mine put the magistrate in a quandary. Eventually he allowed me to go home for the night and said that he would communicate with the Chief Secretary by telephone and let me know the next day (that is today). I reached home at about 3.45 p.m. last night. The same night at about 10 p.m., I sent a letter to the district magistrate repeating what I had told him orally. The answer to that came this afternoon. He said that he quite understood my difficulty in giving any undertaking. But I had recognised the courtesy of the U.P. Government in allowing me to visit my wife and in a similar manner I rely on your courtesy and good sense to do nothing to compromise the present position. The present undertaking will remain in force at least till Wednesday morning, by which time I hope to have

1. Home Department (Political) File No. 3/XI/1934, National Archives of India. This incomplete version is the fullest one available.

2. On 7 August 1934 Mahatma Gandhi commenced his seven days fast as a penance for the acts of violence committed on the Muslims at Agha and thought that self-purification was necessary for the removal of untouchability.





1. To Mahatma Gandhi<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
13th August 1934

My dear Bapu,

Thank you for your telegram—we are all happy to think that you have successfully passed through—or will pass through in a few more hours—your latest self-imposed ordeal.<sup>2</sup> My temporary discharge has undoubtedly done good to Kamala. Fundamentally she may not be much better but the psychological effect has been marked and of course this is a great help in her treatment. She has really been continuously ill, more or less, for the last year or so\*\*\* I am in a peculiar position. On arrival at Allahabad I was met by the district magistrate who told me that the U.P. Government had ordered that I should be permitted to visit my wife and remain with her for two days, and for a longer period if the doctors considered that her condition was still one of serious illness. There were no conditions, he added, only my parole and that I would go back to prison at the end of this period. I told him that I was grateful to the U.P. Government for their courtesy in permitting me to visit my ailing wife but I regretted that I was quite unable to give any undertaking on parole however this might be put. As for going back to prison it was open to them always to take me there. I was not likely to run away or hide myself, nor was I interested in raising legal quibbles. This answer of mine put the magistrate in a quandary. Eventually he allowed me to go home for the night and said that he would communicate with the Chief Secretary by telephone and let me know the next day (that is today). I reached home at about 8.45 p.m. last night. The same night at about 10 p.m., I sent a letter to the district magistrate repeating what I had told him orally. The answer to that came this afternoon. He said that he quite understood my difficulty in giving any undertaking. But I had recognised the courtesy of the U.P. Government in allowing me to visit my wife “and in a similar manner I rely on your courtesy and good sense to do nothing to compromise the present position. The present undertaking will remain in force at least till Wednesday morning, by which time I hope to have

1. Home Department (Political) File No. 3/XI/1934, National Archives of India. This incomplete version is the fullest one available.
2. On 7 August 1934 Mahatma Gandhi commenced his seven days fast as a penance for the acts of violence committed on the *sanatanists* at Ajmer and thought that self-purification was necessary for the removal of untouchability.

received further instructions from the U.P. Government." So that is how matters stand. I am somewhere in mid-air.

It is clear that the government do not wish to have me out of prison at any rate till the next Congress is over. I am inclined to think that I shall be taken back to prison soon. I shall be kept in Nainital this time and can be easily accessible in case of need. I am very glad, however, that I was given this opportunity of seeing Kamala, mother and the others. This has done her good and done me good. Mother has been down with dysentery\*\*\* After just six months of absolute seclusion and anxiety, excitement and activity of the past 27 hours, I feel very tired. I am writing this letter to you at midnight. All day there have been crowds of people coming. If I have the chance I shall write to you again but I doubt if I shall be able to do so for some months. I am therefore going to indicate to you briefly how I have reacted to the various major Congress decisions of the last five months or so. My sources of information have naturally been strictly limited but I think that they were sufficient to enable me to form a fairly correct idea of the general trend of events.

When I heard that you had called off the civil disobedience movement, I felt unhappy. Only the brief announcement reached me at first. Much later I read your statement and this gave me one of the biggest shocks I have ever had. I was prepared to reconcile myself to the withdrawal of civil disobedience. But the reasons you gave for doing so and the suggestions you made for future work astounded me. I had a sudden and intense feeling that something broke inside me, a bond that I have valued very greatly had snapped. I felt terribly lonely in this wide world. I have always felt a little lonely almost from childhood up. But a few bonds strengthened me, a few strong supports held me up. The loneliness never went, but it was lessened. But now I felt absolutely alone, left high and dry on a desert island.

Human beings have an enormous capacity for adapting themselves and so I too adapted myself to some extent to the new conditions. The keenness of my feelings on the subject, which amounted almost to physical pain, passed off; the edge was dulled. But shock after shock, a succession of events sharpened that edge to a fine point, and allowed my mind or feelings no peace or rest. Again I felt that sensation of spiritual isolation, of being a perfect stranger out of harmony, not only with the crowds that passed me, but also with those whom I had valued as dear and close comrades. My stay in prison this time became a greater ordeal for my nerves than any previous visit had been. I almost wished that all newspapers might be kept away from me so that I might be spared these repeated shocks.



Physically I kept fairly well. I always do in prison. My body has served me well and can stand a deal of ill-treatment and strain. And being vain enough to imagine that perhaps I might yet do some effective work in this land to which fate had tied me, I looked after it well.

But I wondered often enough if I was not a square peg in a round hole, or a bubble of conceit thrown about hither and thither on an ocean which spurned me. But vanity and conceit triumphed and the intellectual apparatus that functions within me refused to admit defeat. If the ideals that had spurred me to action and had kept me buoyed up through stormy weather were right—and the conviction of their rightness ever grew within me—they were bound to triumph though my generation might not live to witness that triumph.

But what had happened to those ideals during these long and weary months of this year when I was a silent and distant witness, fretting at my helplessness? Setbacks and temporary defeats are common enough in all great struggles. They grieve but one recovers soon enough. One recovers soon if the light of those ideals is not allowed to grow dim and the anchor of principles holds fast. But what I saw was not setback and defeat but that spiritual defeat which is the most terrible of all. Do not imagine that I am referring to the council entry question. I do not attach vital importance to it. Under certain circumstances I can even imagine entering a legislature myself. But whether I function inside or outside the legislature, I function as a revolutionary, meaning thereby a person working for fundamental and revolutionary changes, political and social, for I am convinced that no other change can bring peace or satisfaction to India and the world.

So I thought. Not so, evidently, the leaders who were functioning outside. They began to talk the language of an age gone by before the heady wine of noncooperation and civil disobedience had fired our heads. Sometimes they used the same words and phrases but they were dead without life or real meaning. The leading figures of the Congress suddenly became those people who had obstructed us, held us back, kept aloof from the struggle and even cooperated with the opposite party in the time of our direst need. They became the high priests in our temple of freedom and many a brave soldier who had shouldered the burden in the heat and dust of the fray was not even allowed inside the temple precincts. He and many like him had become untouchables and unapproachables. And if he ventured to raise his voice and criticize the new high priests, he was shouted down and told that he was a traitor to the cause because he spoilt the harmony of the sacred precincts.

And so the flag of Indian freedom was entrusted with all pomp and circumstance to those who had actually hauled it down at the height



of our national struggle at the bidding of the enemy; to those who had proclaimed from the house-tops that they had given up politics (for politics were unsafe then), but who emerged with a jump to the front ranks when politics became safe.

And what of the ideals they set forth before them, speaking as they did on behalf of the Congress and the nation? A pitiful hotch-potch, avoiding real issues, toning down, as far as they dared, even the political objective of the Congress, expressing a tender solicitude for every vested interest, bowing down to many a declared enemy of freedom, but showing great turbulence and courage in facing the advanced and fighting elements in the Congress ranks. Is not the Congress being rapidly reduced to a magnified edition of that shameful spectacle, the Calcutta Corporation, during the last few years? Might not the dominant part of the Bengal Congress be called today "the society for the advancement of Mr. Nalini Ranjan Sarkar", a gentleman who rejoiced to entertain government officials, Home Members and the like when most of us were in prison and civil disobedience was supposed to be flourishing? And the other part probably a similar society for a similar laudable object? But the fault does not lie with Bengal alone. Almost everywhere there is a similar outlook. The Congress from top to bottom is a caucus and opportunism triumphs.

The Working Committee is not directly responsible for this state of affairs. But none the less the Working Committee must shoulder the responsibility. It is the leaders and their policy that shape the activities of the followers. It is neither fair nor just to throw the blame on the followers. Every language has some saying about the workman blaming his tools. The Committee had deliberately encouraged vagueness in the definition of our ideals and objectives and this is bound to lead not only to confusion but to demoralization during periods of reaction, and to the emergence of the demagogue and the reactionary.

I am referring especially to the political objectives which are the special province of the Congress. I feel that the time is overdue for the Congress to think clearly on social and economic issues but I recognize that education on these issues takes time and the Congress as a whole may not be able to go as far at present as I would like it to. But it appears that whether the Working Committee knows anything about the subject or not it is perfectly willing to denounce and excommunicate people who happen to have made a special study of the subject and hold certain views. No attempt is made to understand those views, which, it is notorious, are held by a very large number of the ablest and most self-sacrificing people in the world. Those views may be right or wrong but they deserve at least some understanding



before the Working Committee sets out to denounce them. It is hardly becoming for a reasoned argument to be answered by sentimental appeals or by the cheap remark that conditions in India are different and the economic laws that apply elsewhere do not function here. The resolution of the Working Committee on the subject showed such astounding ignorance of the elements of socialism that it was painful to read it and to realise that it might be read outside India. It seemed that the overmastering desire of the Committee was somehow to assure various vested interests even at the risk of talking nonsense.

A strange way of dealing with the subject of socialism is to use the word, which has a clearly defined meaning in the English language, in a totally different sense. For individuals to use words in a sense peculiar to themselves is not helpful in the commerce of ideas. A person who declares himself to be an engine-driver and then adds that his engine is of wood and is drawn by bullocks is misusing the word engine-driver.

This letter has become a much longer one than I expected and the night is already far spent. Probably I have written in a confused and scrappy way for my brain is tired. But still it will convey some picture of my mind. The last few months have been very painful ones for me and, I take it, for many others. I have felt sometimes that in the modern world, and perhaps in the ancient world also, it is often preferred to break some people's hearts rather than touch others' pockets. Pockets are indeed more valuable and more cherished than hearts and brains and bodies and human justice and dignity!

There is one other subject I should like to mention. That is the Swaraj Bhawan Trust. I understand that the Working Committee recently considered the question of the upkeep of Swaraj Bhawan and came to the conclusion that it was not responsible for it. As however it had already made a grant about three years ago and this had not been paid yet, although expenses were incurred on the strength of it, a fresh grant was sanctioned.<sup>3</sup> This will probably be enough for some months. In regard to the future the Working Committee was evidently anxious not to be saddled with the burden of maintaining the house and grounds. This burden amounts to Rs. 100 a month, which includes taxes, etc. The trustees, I understand, were also a little frightened of the burden and suggested that parts of the house might be let in the ordinary way to raise money for maintenance. Another suggestion was made that part of the grounds might be sold off for this purpose.

3. On 28 July 1934, a resolution was passed granting money for maintenance and repairs as a special case.



I was surprised to learn of these suggestions, as some of them seemed to me to be contrary to the letter of the trust and all of them against its spirit. As an individual trustee I have only one voice in the matter but I should like to say that I have the strongest possible objection to any such misuse of the trust property. The very idea of the wishes of my father being flouted in this way is intolerable to me. The trust represented not only his wishes but was also in a small way a memorial to him and his wishes, and his memory is dearer to me than a hundred rupees a month. I should, therefore, like to assure the Working Committee and the trustees that they need have no anxiety on the score of the money required for maintenance of the property. As soon as the present funds, now granted by the Working Committee for some months, are exhausted, I shall make myself personally responsible for the maintenance and no further grant need be made by the Committee. I would also beg the trustees to respect my feelings in this matter and not to break up the property or to hire it out for the sake of hiring it out. I shall endeavour to maintain the Swaraj Bhawan till such time as it is put to some worthy use.

I have not the figures by me but I believe that even thus far the Swaraj Bhawan has not been, in any sense, a financial burden on the Working Committee. The grants that have been paid to it will probably not be much in excess of reasonable rent for the quarters occupied by the office of the A.I.C.C. This rent could have been reduced by occupying smaller and cheaper quarters. At the same time in the past the A.I.C.C. has paid as much as Rs. 150/- a month for rent of an upper floor only in Madras.

Perhaps some parts of this letter might pain you. But you would not have me hide my heart from you.<sup>4</sup>

I received your short note in Alipore jail and I sent an answer. But the superintendent suppressed that answer.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawahar

4. In his reply of 17 August 1934, Mahatma Gandhi said that a dispassionate reading of the Working Committee's resolution on socialism would show that the "greatest consideration has been paid to the socialists...but I have found them as a body to be in a hurry. If I cannot march quick, I must ask them to halt and take me along with them. That is literally my attitude". Regarding the Swaraj Bhawan Trust, he asked Jawaharlal not to take it "so personally" but allow the nation to be the custodian of his "father's memory".



## 2. Statement to the Press<sup>1</sup>

I have just noticed in some newspapers a long report purporting to give my present views on current political problems.<sup>2</sup> It has never been my misfortune to come across any press report which was so entirely false and imaginary as this one. I have neither the time nor the inclination to deal with it in any detail but before I go back to prison I should like to express my resentment at various attempts that seem to have been made to misrepresent me. During the last few days that I have been out of prison I have issued no press statement of any kind except one or two brief contradictions. My main preoccupation has been my wife's illness and in any event I would have considered it an impertinence on my part to rush to the press immediately after coming out of prison without acquainting myself fully with the existing situation and conferring with my colleagues. But though I have been completely silent there seems to have been a conspiracy to misrepresent me. I have already contradicted some false reports concerning me and now this long report appearing in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *The Tribune* and other papers has astounded me beyond measure. These reports have not a shadow of foundation and I cannot conceive how any honourable press correspondent could have even imagined such a thing. Apart from current topics they have even ventured to discuss my beliefs relating to certain fundamental principles which hold true regardless of changed circumstances. And in this too they have made me express an opinion which is in direct and absolute contradiction to what I have always stood for. I had and have no desire whatever to issue press statements or to enter into controversies. But I have been compelled by this misrepresentation to issue this total denial of what has been attributed to me. I should like to warn the public against all such imaginary outpourings of press correspondents. Whenever I have the opportunity to study the situation and to consult all my colleagues I shall no doubt give expression to my views directly and above my signature. I shall not then leave pressmen and others to guess what my views are.

1. 18 August 1934. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. It had been stated that Jawaharlal had endorsed Mahatma Gandhi's policies and felt that Vallabhbhai Patel was correct in 'rebuking' some socialists who understood neither the theory nor the practice of socialism.

### 3. To Jairamdas Doulatram<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad

August 19, 1934

My dear Jairamdas,

I have your letter. I was a little surprised to find that you suggest my taking charge of the office here. I might be taken to Naini prison any moment and indeed I expect to go there soon. Under these circumstances no question of my doing office work can arise. Besides, whenever I have the chance to do so I must first see Gandhiji as well as my colleagues of the Working Committee and have a good talk with them before I indulge in any public activity. I cannot even make a public statement without first consulting my colleagues. Certain statements have appeared in the public press attributed to me but these are entirely imaginary and concocted. I am greatly annoyed about them, partly because I have not made those statements in public or even in private and partly because they misrepresent me. I shall issue no statement of any kind till I have had the chance of seeing you all, whenever that might be. Please inform Vallabhbhai of this.

You had better, therefore, keep the A.I.C.C. staff with you. They will be of little use here. Raja Rao is still ill and bed-ridden and I have not seen him yet.

Kamala is just a little better but these little changes from day to day do not mean much. I am afraid she will be bed-ridden for a long time.

I am glad Vallabhbhai is getting on well. I hope he will be quite fit soon. Please give my love to him.

Yours affectionately,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.



4. To Sampurnanand<sup>1</sup>

Allahabad  
22.8.34

My dear Sampurnanand,

Thank you for your letter. I have been living a curious existence from day to day, expecting to be taken off at any moment to Naini. But the summons has not come and here I am still. I am yet quite uncertain about it.

Kamala has been just a little better during the last four days. She has had no heart attack and this has enabled her to pick up a little. The pleurisy is also subsiding. But, in the best of circumstances, she is likely to be bed-ridden for a long time.

I followed in prison through *The Statesman* the activities of the new Socialist Party.<sup>2</sup> The data supplied to me was limited but I could form some idea of what was happening. Since my release I have had a talk with Jayaprakash and he must have told you about it.

I do not know when we shall meet. Perhaps it may not be long before we do so.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Sampurnanand Papers, National Archives of India.

2. The Socialist Party held its first All India Conference at Patna on 17 May 1934 under the presidentship of Acharya Narendra Deva.





## PRISON DIARY WITH LETTERS

23 August 1934—3 September 1935

Transferred from Dehra Dun Jail to Naini Prison—August 11th 1934  
 Released at Prayag Station—August 12th 1934  
 Taken back to prison—August 13th 1934  
 Back in Naini Central Prison—August 14th 1934  
 (1934) I reached Naini last year from Dehra Dun Jail.

Aug. 24, Friday

In and Out—Out & In! After eleven days of freedom back I come to Naini Prison. Eleven days of meeting crowds of friends, discussions and of course Kamala's illness. Eleven days of comfortable living. And now I am back to the loneliness of solitary jail life. I fully expected to be put again in my old barrack 5. But I am now in No. 3 in the enclosure where Malaviya was kept. I don't like this place at all. It is all closed up...

Aug. 30th, Thursday

A week today—and today is also the anniversary of my discharge from Naini last year. I have found some difficulty in settling down. I remain in this enclosure all day and walk up & down it, backwards & forwards. Only twice have I been out when I had to go to the office—once for an interview & the other time to be weighed &c.

I felt sure that I would be allowed to have exercise outside and waited for the Supt. to tell me of it. But he remained mum. Kanji asked me at the time of interview & then I decided to ask the Supt. I was told that if I wanted to I would be allowed to go out for exercise but the I.C. had ordered that this should be permitted only during lock-up hours when other prisoners were not about. This means that in the morning I should go out at about 5 or earlier when it is fairly dark. How the jail discipline will be affected if I went out a little later, it is difficult to imagine. No doubt my dear friend the I.C. wanted to remind me of his existence and his authority.

Another choice example of the ways of Govt. I am supposed to receive the doctor's daily bulletin about Kamala's condition. This has to be sent to the police office who apparently phone it to the jail. A direct phone to the jail would no doubt improve the state. As it is, sometimes the police people forget, & I wait on.

14. The footnote numbering has been continued from section 3 as there is a continuity in the jail diary.





Transferred from Dehra Dun Jail

—August 11th, 1934

Released at Prayag Station

—August 12th, evening

Taken back to prison—Naini

—August 23rd, evening<sup>54</sup>

Back in Naini Central Prison—Exactly a year ago (on August 23rd, 1933) I reached Naini last year from Dehra Dun Jail.

*Aug. 24, Friday*

In and Out—Out & In! After eleven days of freedom back I come to Naini Prison. Eleven days of meeting crowds of friends, discussions and of course Kamala's illness. Eleven days of comfortable living. And now I am back to the loneliness of solitary jail life. I fully expected to be put again in my old barrack 6. But I am now in No. 5 in the enclosure where Malaviyaji was kept. I don't like this place at all. It is all closed up...

*Aug. 30th, Thursday*

A week today—and today is also the anniversary of my discharge from Naini last year. I have found some difficulty in settling down. I remain in this enclosure all day and walk up & down it, backwards & forwards. Only twice have I been out when I had to go to the office—once for an interview & the other time to be weighed &c.

I felt sure that I would be allowed to have exercise outside and waited for the Supt. to tell me of it. But he remained mum. Ranjit asked me at the time of interview & then I decided to ask the Supt. I was told that if I wanted to I would be allowed to go out for exercise but the I.G. had ordered that this should be permitted only during lock-up hours when other prisoners were not about. This means that in the morning I should go out at about 5 or earlier when it is fairly dark. How the jail discipline will be affected if I went out a little later, it is difficult to imagine. No doubt my dear friend the I.G. wanted to remind me of his existence and his authority.

Another choice example of the ways of Govt. I am supposed to receive the doctor's daily bulletin about Kamala's condition. This has to be sent to the police office who apparently phone it to the jail. A direct phone to the jail would no doubt imperil the state. As it is, sometimes the police people forget, & I wait on.

54. The footnote numbering has been continued from section 3 as there is a continuity in the jail diaries.

30th August, 1934<sup>55</sup>

Indu sweetheart,

I do not know if you have gone back or are still here. I fancy you must be back. Your visit here in the midst of term and stay for a fortnight must have broken the continuity of your work and come in the way of your settling down in Santiniketan. I know the feeling for, in another sphere, I had a similar experience and I am taking some time to adjust myself again to my new surroundings. But I was very glad indeed to have those eleven days in Anand Bhawan, to see mummie and to have a chance of being with you for a brief while. That interlude refreshed me greatly and I have something to look back to when I feel a little stale and weary.

It won't be very long, I hope, before I see you again—six or seven weeks when your *puja* holidays begin. I am hoping that by that time mummie will be well enough to go to the hills.

I should like her to spend October and November, and if she likes, the whole winter, in the Almora hills. I shall not be able to see her for I shall be at Naini, but then I can't see her even when she is at Anand Bhawan.

You could be with her for some weeks in the hills but you will have to come back for your college. Perhaps Bul might agree to stay with her. However, we need not worry ourselves about this future programme yet.

I was not at all happy to find how weak physically you were when you could not do some simple exercises. I was quite surprised. I wish you would not allow yourself to grow limp and flabby. Not to be physically fit seems to me one of the major sins that a person can be guilty of.

Write to me and tell me of your experiences at college. I suppose you will begin your French afresh now as Kripalani<sup>56</sup> suggested.

Your loving  
Papu

55. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

56. Krishna Kripalani (b. 1907); taught at Visvabharati, 1933-46; secretary of the Sahitya Akademi, 1954-71; Padma Bhushan, 1969; nominated member of Rajya Sabha, 1974; his works include *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*.



Sept. 1, Saturday

Had a visit from the Collector today. When I saw him coming for a moment I thought his visit might be in connection with Kamala's illness. Perhaps there were some special orders of Govt. Perhaps I was to be allowed to see her..... Nothing of the kind! He asked me in his best official way if I wished to make any representation to Govt. about facilities for special interviews &c!

The daily bulletins get worse & more alarming. I find it difficult to concentrate on anything.

2nd September 1934

नन्नी की सालगिरा संवत भाद्रपद बदी ६।<sup>57</sup>

6th September 1934

Spratt discharged today after 5½ years! Saw him for a while in the jail office.

Sept. 13, Thursday

...In the afternoon I had a visit from the Asst. Jailer informing me that the *Bara Sahab* was of opinion that I was writing too many letters. He further enquired who Mr. Bett was and if Feroze was the Feroze Gandhi who used to be in Fyzabad jail. I explained that Feroze was indeed that very person and Mr. Bett was my sister whom I called Betty.

I do not know the fate of my letters...

16th September 1934

Jivraj Mehta, Madan Atal and Col. Townsend<sup>58</sup> came and examined me. Bad news of Kamala.

Sept. 18, Tuesday

The days seem to be intolerably long—and the nights. Time seems almost to stand still or move terribly slowly. I have never had this

57. Nan's birthday, *Samvat*, 9th day of *Bhadrapad* when the moon is waning.

58. R.S. Townsend, I.M.S. (b. 1882); inspector general of civil hospitals, U.P., 1934; civil surgeon, Lucknow, 1937.

feeling in this acute degree before. Every hour is a burden and a horror. I count the days I have already been and the days I have still to be here. And my mind wanders to Kamala and I fret. And then I think of Indu.

*19th September 1934*

Interview with Birju Bhai, Birju Bhabhi and Ranjit.

Interview with Amiya C. Chakravarty<sup>59</sup> (of Santiniketan, address. Balliol—Oxford).

*Sept. 22, Saturday*

It is getting more and more difficult to carry on. On the 19th I had an interview with Birju Bhai, Birju Bhabhi, & Ranjit—Bad news of Kamala—also some other matters that irritated me. That night I could not sleep and I sat up in bed or walked up & down for hours.

The next day I wrote to Kamala. The letter was not due but I asked for special permission & this was given. I thought that writing of this would relieve me and might perhaps cheer Kamala.

In any event I am likely to be released six or seven weeks later—after the Congress.<sup>60</sup> Ordinarily these few weeks would have gone all too swiftly. But now they seem almost an eternity and every day seems a long & painful affair. I find myself sometimes counting the hours! There is also just a chance of my being released soon. If so, this will come off in another three days or not at all. Probably not.

*Sept. 23, Sunday*

How much better I feel today. I feel refreshed, full of vitality and almost light-hearted. This forenoon the D.S.P. came along with the jailer and told me that he had come to take me away. Was it my discharge, I wondered. I asked him. No, I was to go home for a few hours and then I was to come back to prison. I was thankful for this chance.

59. (b. 1901); lecturer at Santiniketan and secretary to Rabindranath Tagore, 1926-33; professor at Boston, U.S.A. since 1953.

60. The 48th session of the Indian National Congress which was to be held on 26 and 27 October 1934.



And so I went and saw Kamala & mother & Nan & the others and remained in Anand Bhawan just three hours and then came back.

K was distinctly weaker & thinner but she looked cheerful when I first saw her—not so when she had a little heart attack later. I think my visit did her some good. And to mother also—how aged she was looking. Certainly it has done me good. Probably I shall be taken to see her twice a week.

I have had such a pleasing letter from Indu.

### *Sept. 29, Saturday*

It is six days since I saw her—Monday went by easily. Tuesday brought a report which was not good. On Wednesday I hoped to see her again—More or less I had been given to understand that I would be taken twice a week to see her—even the hour had been fixed, between 8 and 9 in the morning. Wednesday, the middle of the week, was thus the likely day, and if not Wednesday then surely Thursday was a certainty.

So on Wednesday morning I got quite ready earlier than usual. I took greater pains over my shave &c. and sat waiting for the summons to come. I could not concentrate on reading or writing—My attention wandered continually to the gate of the barrack, and every little noise made me look up. But no one came, at any rate no one to fetch me.

The day before I had written a long note for the doctors intending to take this with me when I went. On Tuesday morning I had sent it to the Supt. for his permission to take it away. He had kept it—probably took it with him to show it to the Dist. Magte. He returned it to me—passed—on Wednesday afternoon.

Wednesday evening I was told that Madan Atal had come to the jail gate. He had tried to have an interview with me but was not allowed, I was permitted however to send him my note.

Why was I not allowed to see him, I wondered? An interview was due in the ordinary course if my visit to Kamala was not taken into account. There must be something in it. Perhaps I am going to be taken to Kamala tomorrow—Thursday. Perhaps I am going to be left with her again for ten days or so as before. The D.S.P. had hinted on Friday that this would be a good arrangement, better than my going backwards & forwards from prison. Of course he knew nothing & had no authority but one clutches at straws in gaol.

Thursday came and again I waited for the summons—No one came.

The day's temperature report came. 104°F. I gasped with the shock of it. She seems to be going, going, and I sit here helpless. Is her young life to end so soon.

A terrible day.

Today—Saturday—will they not take me to her even now? Even the Supt. has not come to me for four days.

*Sept. 30, Sunday*

The Supt. came yesterday—Looked ashamed of himself & miserable—asked me if I would like to see Dr. Atal— yes, yes I shall see Atal or anybody—but I want to see Kamala and that obviously is not to be. They did not even take me today—Sunday—I had a faint hope that they might. Why did they tell me last week that they would take me twice a week? What a joke to play on me!

This damned month of September is at last over. It has been the longest & the most miserable month I have had.

"The days of that month.....were blood drops, one by one..... coldly gathered.....hanging pendent to the twist of midnight....."

It has been awful.

This afternoon I was reading about the World War. About the terrible sufferings of the people—the deaths—the mangled wounds—the desolation at home—and also of the gross bungling of the generals—their mutual quarrels & incompetence. All this had a curious effect on me. It cheered me up! After all what are we going through? Personal loss, national failure & humiliation. How much more have others suffered. Are we to lose heart so soon? What absence of nerve. Why all this can be pulled round, will be pulled round. We must face it bravely. I have written about it as if I questioned myself & pulled myself up. But the feeling stole upon me unawares and filled me with strength.

*October 2, Tuesday*

The feeling of strength did not last long. It oozed out during the night and October found me unhappy & miserable.

In the afternoon yesterday a surprising interview—Indu, Psyche & Bul. I had no idea that any of these three was in Allahabad. Felt very glad they were here. But their news of Kamala alarming. Her temperature mounts up.

Bad night & worse morning. Felt bad today. Then Madan Atal came and I had a long talk with him which slightly reassured me.



Expect Bidhan tomorrow & then it will be settled where & when Kamala is to be moved.

A suggestion sent to me—Hailey, Sapru, Nan, Psyche that if I could say to a third party, say Higginbottom<sup>61</sup> that I would not indulge in politics I would be released to attend on Kamala. Not possible.

I have been feeling much better since Madan's visit & talks.

*October 3, Wednesday*

I was taken to her today again for 3 hours because Bidhan had come—How much weaker she looked—a shadow. Gone downhill since last I saw her ten days ago. Bidhan seeing her after ten days, said her condition had greatly deteriorated. She is to wait no longer here in the hope of getting better & then going elsewhere for treatment. She is going soon to Bhowali—perhaps in another four or five days. When will I see her again? Will I see her at all? Brave little girl. She smiled at me as I was coming away though her temperature was 103.4 and she was in a daze. And even in this condition she said: do not give an assurance to Govt.! How she longs to have me out and by her but not even that at the price of undertakings to the Govt.

I feel both heavy and empty since my return to my barrack—and so lonely & weary.

I gave Kamala today Edgar Allan Poe's lines:<sup>62</sup>

Thou wast all that to me, love,  
 For which my soul did pine—  
 A green isle in the sea, love,  
 A fountain and a shrine,  
 All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,  
 And all the flowers were mine.  
 And all my days are trances  
 And all my nightly dreams  
 Are where thy grey eye glances,  
 And where thy footstep gleams—  
 In what ethereal dances,  
 By what eternal streams.

They seemed to represent my feelings.

61. S. Higginbottom was an American who was the principal of the Agricultural Institute at Allahabad.

62. The lines quoted are from *To One in Paradise*.

*Oct. 9, Tuesday*

Yesterday to my surprise, I was again taken to Anand Bhawan. This time it was in the morning and I found Kamala looking bright & cheerful. She is usually well in the mornings, the temperature going up in the afternoons. But on the whole she has kept just slightly better for the last four or five days. Temperature kept below 103. Nothing to shout about and yet even this a relief.

I was taken to bid good-bye to her as she is going to be taken to Bhowali. She is due to go tomorrow—the 10th with Madan and Bul. Today a day in advance, Indu must have gone with Amma & servants, to make arrangements.

Kamala's bright face and the knowledge that all arrangements have been made at Bhowali has cheered me up greatly and the sense of strain has gone. I feel more normal now and prison life is just what it usually has been to me—a dull and monotonous routine. Already nearly a third of October has gone. This month will pass more swiftly.

There is some talk of my being transferred to Naini Tal but I don't think this can be true, unless Kamala's condition grows worse.

I met Kripalani yesterday at Anand Bhawan.

*Oct. 15, Monday*

I complete 8 months today not taking into account the 11 days outside in between. That is just a third of my full sentence of 2 years. I wonder how much longer I shall have to serve this sentence. Seven weeks more according to my reckoning of 100 days from 23rd August when I came back!

The month is not going as fast as I thought—I feel greatly bored but on the whole I am not unhappy in an acute way. Chiefly this is due to a more satisfactory feeling about Kamala, though I have had no news of her for three days. Last news that she had reached Bhowali & was doing fairly well.

Salamatullah suddenly departed again. It was rumoured that he had gone to Simla. Manoeuvres perhaps to get the I.G. ship. This evening he is suddenly back & a whisper runs through the jail that he is here again.



Oct. 16, Tuesday

Several unusual happenings—The morning began with bad news—a telegram from Bhowali to say that Kamala had had a severe heart attack....

19th October 1934

म्राज मदन का तार मिला कि १७/१० को यानी परसों (pneumothorax) कमला पर किया गया।<sup>63</sup>

20.10.34<sup>64</sup>

TO THE SUPERINTENDENT, NAINI JAIL

Dear Major Salamatullah,

I was surprised to learn from you today that I was supposed to have been receiving letters frequently, and sometimes every two or three days. You told me that in future the rules should be followed in this respect. I entirely agree that in this matter as in others the rules should not be stretched in my favour or special exceptions made. The U.P. Government has been good enough to afford me special facilities to see my wife and to get news of her and I am grateful to it for this. It would be improper of me to try to have other facilities and privileges thrown in and I certainly do not desire to have any.

As for letters received by me, I had a home letter from my sister and daughter on September 3rd. On the next day—September 4th—a letter from C.F. Andrews was sent to me. I did not know why it had been passed by you so soon after my home letter. I was pleased to get it of course but if I had known that it was counted as an ordinary letter I would not have taken it. I could not very well return it when you had been good enough to pass it.

For five weeks after that no letter of any kind came to me. On October 9th I requested the acting superintendent to send word to my people that a letter should be sent to me from Bhowali immediately after my wife's arrival there. She was leaving on October 10th. Mr. Sahi was good enough to send this message and I expected the letter on

63. Received Madan's telegram today that on 17/10, i.e., day before yesterday, Kamala had her pneumothorax.

64. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

the 14th or 15th October. Mr. Sahi himself told me on the 14th that he was surprised the letter from Bhowali had not come yet.

Meanwhile, on the 10th October I received unexpectedly a letter directly from my sister in Bombay. This came to me five weeks after my previous letter and I imagined that it was due to me and could not interfere with the letter I was expecting from Bhowali. Mr. Sahi, knowing of my anxious wait for the letter, had passed and sent my sister's little note.

When no letter came from Bhowali till the 18th I wrote at last. It appears now that the letter had crossed mine in your office. If I had known this I would have preferred to delay my own letter by a day or two, as now my complaint at not receiving my daughter's letter will only mystify and worry my people. Probably the Bhowali letter was despatched on the 14th or 15th and in the ordinary course they would have expected it to reach me by the 18th.

I am informing you of these facts because you have been away and apparently wrong entries have been made in my ticket. As it happens, I have not received or written so few letters in prison during the last nearly three years as I have done during the last 8 weeks here.

I am enclosing for your information Mr. Andrews' and my sister's letters—the only two I have received since September 4th, 1934. As my sister's letter was delivered to me on October 10th I imagine that the fortnight might be counted from that time, and the next letter should be due to me on the 24th October. If that is the rule I do not wish it to be varied in my favour even by a day. Besides there is no particular point now as my own letter has gone already. I was anxious to have the Bhowali letter before I wrote mine.

Perhaps it will be better to return my daughter's letter to her by post and ask her to write another and a fresher letter. I would get this in time for my next reply. Otherwise our letters will be crossing *en route* and will always be out of date, as in the last instance.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

24th October 1934

आज शाम को आखिर, इन्दु का खत और मदन का मुझे दिया गया। १ हफ्ते बाद। कुछ तबीयत ढीली रही—हरारत सी मालूम हुई।<sup>65</sup>

65. At last, this evening, I was given Indu's and Madan's letters—after a week. A bit indisposed—felt slightly feverish.



*Oct. 28th, Sunday*

Here I am established in Almora in an enormous empty barrack & locked up in it.

I had an uneventful journey yesterday. S took some trouble to inform Nan that I was leaving but failed in the attempt! A little before I left Naini he telephoned to Anand Bhawan & got Upadhyaya.

I was taken to Prayag—Five minutes or less after my arrival there, Nan & Ranjit & Chand & Upadhyaya arrived and we were together for ten or fifteen minutes.

At Lucknow station Madan &c. Upadhyaya had phoned to him & Feroze had also wired from Bhowali.

At Bareilly Dwarka Prasad & his wife. Five hours stay there on the platform. Very tiring. The sergeant who was supposed to look after me (his name: Hanbins) took his duties very lightly. Left me by myself and found a sister of his somewhere near the station. Fed with her & then came back late in the evening. At Kathgodam he decided to shed the two constables. What was the use of carting them about to Bhowali & Almora. Wisely he left them at Kathgodam. It would have been wiser still if they had been left at Allahabad.

Bhowali—Kamala looking well & cheerful. Bright little cottages—a bit too small. Indu, Bul &c. all seemed to be flourishing. Had a long talk with Kacker. He has a grievance that he was not thought of earlier. The grievance is justified and there can be no doubt that there has been a deal of messing with K's treatment. We are both to blame K & I—though I have been in gaol. But I feel Bidhan must share the blame also for his casual treatment of K in April in Calcutta. If I had had an inkling of the fact that he had discovered T.B. germs I would have acted very differently even from gaol. And Bidhan did not even have radiographs taken then! He was too busy with his politics.

The Alipore jail also to blame. I wrote to Bidhan and they suppressed my letter without informing me of it.

But all this is the past and just at the moment things are brightening up. Kacker said that when he took K's radiograph & saw it he had a shock for it looked a hopeless case. The left side all a blank! (Indeed it looked so to me when I saw the X-ray). With great reluctance he began the A.P. (artificial pneumothorax) and lo & behold, a wonderful response! It was perfectly extraordinary, he said, how

she improved. It almost seemed as if there was a trick somewhere. So for the moment she is doing well, but—there are so many buts, and one dare not be sure.

Journey to Ranikhet good—afterwards dusty and tiring. But nearing Almora a glimpse of a huge pyramid of a snow-covered peak towering above the clouds—rather thrilling.

What with K's improvement and the mountain scenery & the glimpse of the snow I felt happy and contented. Little ill will against anybody. Suddenly I remembered that the Congress was meeting just then in Bombay in the midst of turmoil & distrust. And here I was so peaceful and detached and feeling as if so very far away from it.

Almora—the District Jail. A poor affair. The jailer sprawling on his chair in a little office which shouted out its incompetence & inefficiency & uncleanness.

Shown my barrack where till lately M.N. Roy dwelt. Not to my liking and being locked up gets on my nerves always. But a new jail never appeals to me. I have to get used to it. There is a fairly agreeable place attached to my barrack for exercise &c.

It is barely seven and I am feeling very tired and sleepy. I propose to sleep. There is nothing else to do. No proper arrangements made yet for any work &c.

30.10.34<sup>66</sup>

Betty darling,

I have moved up in the world since I wrote to you last and here I am in the Himalayas, perched up on a ridge, communing with the sky and the clouds. It is fairly cold here but not nearly as cold as I expected. I have taken to my sun-baths in the morning and they will grow pleasanter as the cold increases.

On our way up I spent a few hours with Kamala at Bhowali. I found her much better than when I saw her last at Allahabad. It is obvious that the change and treatment are doing her good. She is likely to stay up right through the winter but much depends on future progress.

Nan told me something about your difficulties regarding the hospital which is the most unattractive place that I have seen; I am sure you



will not be happy there. At the same time I do not think that confinements should take place at home. This is an old-fashioned notion which must be given up. A nursing home or a hospital is far better, and of the two, the hospital is preferable. Nursing homes are rather fancy places, the distinguishing feature being the heavy charges made. But, of course, I cannot advise from here and you and Raja will no doubt fix up everything satisfactorily....

Your loving brother,  
Jawahar

5th November 1934<sup>67</sup>

TO KUNWAR JAGDISH PRASAD

Dear Kunwar Jagdish Prasad,

An item of news in *The Pioneer* of November 4th, which I have just seen, has distressed me greatly and I am therefore taking the unusual course of writing to you from gaol.

About a month ago, when I was in Naini Prison, I read in *The Pioneer* that Mr. Girdhari Lal Agarwala,<sup>68</sup> an advocate of the Allahabad High Court, had presented an application to the High Court as *amicus curiae* urging my release on the ground of some legal technicality.<sup>69</sup> I was greatly surprised and put out at this and I learnt with relief that the High Court had rejected his application. I need hardly say that Mr. Girdhari Lal Agarwala had absolutely no authority from me or any member of my family or friend, to take this step. I considered it a highly improper step both from my personal point of view and having regard to the circumstances. To endeavour to take advantage by a legal quibble of the courtesy shown to me by the government seemed to me a very undesirable course to adopt. I would have repudiated it at the time if I had been in a position to do so.

I now find that Mr. Girdhari Lal Agarwala has gone a step further and has submitted a memorial to the Viceroy<sup>70</sup> urging my release on

67. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

68. (b. 1878); advocate, High Court, Allahabad; secretary, U.P. Hindu Sabha; member, U.P. Assembly, 1937-39.

69. On 25 September 1934 Agarwala presented an appeal on the ground that Jawaharlal's re-arrest, after a parole of 11 days, without a fresh trial was illegal.

70. It was reported on 1 November 1934 that Agarwala had submitted a memorial to the Viceroy. This was later denied by the government.

the ground of my wife's illness. I really do not know why Mr. Agarwala should persist in these tactics which, if he had known us at all well, he would have realised could only distress and annoy me and my wife. I hardly know him and I have not seen him ever since I gave up legal practice fifteen years ago. His motives may be of the best but I must resent his repeated interference in my personal affairs. I do not know if it is possible for you to do so, but I would be grateful if you could have the memorial returned to him and inform him that I object to his intrusions in my personal affairs.

May I add that I am very grateful to the Provincial Government for the facilities that have been granted to me during the last three months for spending some days with my wife, seeing her occasionally later on, and receiving reports of her condition. I am particularly grateful to Sir Malcolm Hailey for the personal interest he has taken in the matter. It was very good of him to direct, as I learnt later, that everything should be done to facilitate my wife's journey to Bhowali.

Quite frankly I feel that the U.P. Government has gone very much out of its way to meet an individual case and I am somewhat embarrassed by this special consideration. It would be wrong and absurd to expect the government to vary state policy because of individual cases; personal reasons cannot and should not interfere with principles and larger issues. I have myself endeavoured to act in that way, and, if I may say so without impropriety, I thoroughly appreciate that government cannot do so.

May I also thank you personally for the courtesy you and the Kunwarani showed my wife?

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

8th November 1934

इन्दु आज भवाली से इलाहाबाद और फिर शान्तिनिकेतन जावेगी ।<sup>71</sup>

Nov. 14, Wednesday

My Birthday—45! One of the blankest birthdays I have had. I expected to hear from Bhowali—flowers at least—and from mother—she

71. Today Indu will be going to Allahabad from Bhowali and then to Santiniketan.



always sends a telegram—and Betty had actually written that she was sending something—and Bebee and Mahmud. I waited in the morning. Nothing came—Afternoon also blank. Curiously enough not even the jailer, who comes almost daily, turned up. I thought of my last birthday at home—and the one before in Dehra jail where I had companions and the one before that (1931) at home—and in 1930 in Naini Prison with Mahmud showering gifts on me!

Late in the afternoon my loneliness was broken into. Flowers & fruits arrived from Bhowali & a doctor's report which was not good. Also a telegram from Betty & Raja.

My loneliness did not go and the bad news rather depressed me. And so I launch out on another year.

The early election news is good. Shanmukham Chetty<sup>72</sup> has been defeated. So have two or three Nationalists & Hindu Sabhaites. I am specially interested in the defeat of Munje, Parmanand, Nanak Chand<sup>73</sup> of Delhi (because Parmanand supports him) Hari Singh Gaur, Bagla, Mohammad Yakub & Shafaat Ahmad.

Nov. 19, *Monday*

Indu's birthday today—seventeenth! I thought a lot about her.

The acting Supt.—Dr. Mehta—told me today that I shall have to pay a visit to Bhowali soon. I am glad. It is over three weeks since I saw Kamala.

I had a reply from Jagdish Prasad to my letter today.<sup>74</sup> Brief, non-committal, but generally decent. What I expected.

It is over nine months now since my conviction. Already this has become my longest term bar the last. Vague talks of my impending release have an unsettling effect. If I knew definitely one way or the other I could settle down. Unconsciously I begin to make plans as to what I shall do when I get out—expecting of course to be out soon.

The elections are nearly over. Another three or four days and all the excitement will have died down. Congress candidates have done

72. (1892-1953); for some time member of the Swaraj Party; member, Central Legislative Assembly, 1923-34; Dewan, Cochin state 1935-41; Finance Minister, Government of India 1947-48; vice-chancellor, Annamalai University 1951-52.

73. Rai Sahib Nanak Chand stood against Asaf Ali and was defeated.

74. Jagdish Prasad wrote on 15 November 1934 that he had ascertained from the secretariat that no memorial had been received regarding his release and that if any such memorial were received the U.P. Government would act according to Jawaharlal's wishes in this matter.

well. I was so pleased to find that Abhyankar<sup>75</sup> had defeated Munje. Many other undesirables also gone.

Sometimes I feel that I am bound to be released within the next fortnight or so. At other times I feel the opposite! Well, well—two or three weeks will show—Our new boss—Haig is coming soon and he is likely to prefer my remaining in gaol.

Nov. 24, Saturday

...Kamala was not looking so well as when I saw her 3½ weeks before. Her temperature was going up and other complications. I had a long talk with Kacker—not very satisfactory. I fussed about a lot, interfered with various arrangements, probably irritated some people a little—my usual unhappy procedure! But I think I did Kamala good and the sight of her and long outing did me good. I had a long talk with her last evening.

I spent the night at Bhowali. What a tremendous help Bul & Feroze have been to us.

At 11.30 a.m. today I left Bhowali with my police escort and I was back here again soon after 3 p.m. Back again in my huge solitary barrack! How terribly lonely it feels. I have been feeling very lonely and depressed. These outings, as everything else worth having, have to be paid for, and they are not cheap. It is difficult to get back to the gaol routine.

26th November 1934<sup>76</sup>

*Indu bien aimee,*

I have had a little outing from gaol and have visited Bhowali and seen mummie. I went on Friday last, spent the night there, and returned on Saturday morning. I was very glad to see mummie again after nearly a month but I wish I had found her better than she was. She has not been keeping well lately.

Your letter from Santiniketan, written soon after your arrival there, has reached me. I am glad you have decided to have a more sensible breakfast than *puris* and dal. *Puris* may be excellent but at 6 in the morning they are not very inviting.

75. M.V. Abhyankar (1886-1935); follower of Tilak; joined Swaraj Party in 1922; president of the Harijan Seva Mandal.

76. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



I sent you a book—*Humanity Uprooted* by Hindus<sup>77</sup>—for your birthday. It must have reached you many days after the birthday. This was partly my fault and partly the gaol's. It was not a book that I would have particularly selected for you but I had no choice in the matter. It came to me just then and I had no other more suitable book. I had read it two or three years ago and found it good, and so I hastened to send it on to you. It is supposed to be one of the best books on changing Russia. One must remember, however, that Russia is changing so rapidly that books get out of date very soon.

Padmaja sent me a number of books for my birthday and so did Dr. Mahmud. I am always sure of birthday presents from these two! One of the books that Padmaja sent was a beautiful one about Pavlova<sup>78</sup> with scores of fine pictures. In my student days in England I had often seen her and I was very fond of her dancing. She was probably the best dancer of the Russian classical school. The book brought back the old days very vividly to me. I wish you would write to Bebee—as I cannot do so from here—and tell her how happy I was to get her books and especially how much I enjoyed the Pavlova book. I looked through its pictures again and again and, when I had read it, I took it to mummie and left it with her.

About Hindi, I think it will be a good thing for you to take some private tuition, as you suggest. You can consult your Panditji about this and Mr. Chanda.

I hope you will enjoy your little excursion. I have no idea where you are going to.

All my love,

Your loving,  
Papu

Dec. 3, Monday

Another month gone and soon the year itself will end. News from Kamala not good. It is terrible for the poor girl—4½ months in bed and not even getting better. I don't suppose I could do much and

77. Maurice Gerschon Hindus (1891-1969); Russian-born journalist and author; emigrated to the U.S.A., 1905; his works include *Russia and Japan* and *The House Without a Roof*.

78. Anna Pavlova (1881-1931); Russian ballerina, best known for her performance in *The Dying Swan*.

yet I would make a difference. But I wait, not knowing what will happen to her and to me. How bad this uncertainty is. I had made a rough guess, when I came back to prison in August, that I would not remain here for more than a 100 days. And so I had told K. Today is the 102nd day!

I read in the paper two days ago that Subhas's father was dying & Subhas had been sent for. He was to come by aeroplane. Then yesterday I read that the Govt. is not going to permit his return!<sup>79</sup> Amazing. If they behave like this to Subhas, why should they release me before my time?

*Dec. 6, Thursday*

So that's that! Samuel Hoare has stated clearly that he is not prepared to recommend to the Govt. of India to give me more concessions, that is, regarding release.<sup>80</sup> I am not to be discharged. Strange how on reading this my prospect of the future changed. Immediately I began to think of the many books I can read in prison and the other things I can do. The outside world receded into the distance.....I had been toying too much with the idea of going out soon.

*Dec. 7, Friday*

I feel very depressed today. I read this morning of the restraint orders served on Subhas on arrival at Calcutta. What a savage & brutal order! Served on a person returning with all haste to see his ailing father, to find him dead.

This afternoon, the Supt. gave me Kamala's letter with a number of enclosures. I had been waiting for it for some time. I was told that in future I must write one letter only & send no enclosures as I have done in the past, and so also about receiving letters. The matter had been referred to the I.G. (Salamatullah) and these are his orders or rather he has simply said that rules must be followed. So a four

79. Bose arrived at Karachi on 3 December 1934. The restraint order prohibited him from leaving his residence, addressing public gatherings, interviewing visitors or corresponding with anybody.

80. On 3 December 1934, in reply to a question by H.K. Hales in the House of Commons to reconsider the question of Jawaharlal's release in view of Kamala's serious illness, Hoare stated that considerable concessions had already been granted in transferring him to a jail near the sanatorium and he was not prepared to recommend any further concessions.



years' practice ends and I may not write or receive letters from Indu or Nan or Betty or mother for my fortnightly letters will go to Kamala. This is going to be a harder infliction than many others have been. I have felt very lonely this evening, remote from everybody and everything.

*Dec. 21, Friday*

How I have been counting the days to my next visit to Bhowali! And yet I do not know when it is likely to be. Perhaps between Christmas & the New Year. But Kacker is going away just then and he might make no proper arrangements. I hope Nan & Indu are there when I go.

The last week has been dismal—rain, mist, no sun. I have sat all day inside shivering, all wrapped up. On two evenings I even had a brazier of charcoal. And yesterday I acknowledged the onset of age by having a hot water bottle in my bed. I think this is the first time I have voluntarily had one.

Today for a change was a bright cloudless day. All day I sat in the sun. Perhaps I overdid this sunning for my skin is chapping off in places. But it was very pleasant.

Heigh ho! And so the year is almost past and soon we shall have another.

*Dec. 24, Monday*

...Christmas tomorrow—these festivals make one feel lonely in jail. The papers full of festivities and shows and fancy shopping.

I have felt particularly cheerless today—my mind repeatedly wandering back to my student days in England. And I have quite longed for a smoke today.

1935

*January 1st—Tuesday*

The New Year has begun well for me—yesterday I went to Bhowali and saw the New Year in with Kamala. Hardly ever before have I had such a long and comforting time with her. We talked and talked about the past, present & future and I think we succeeded in unravelling many a knot. I have left her today full of peace and goodwill for the future. And it really surprises me how attached we are to each other. How much she means to me and I to her.

One little regret. I just missed Ranjit. He must have arrived in Bhowali soon after I left today. But I shall see him here soon at a jail interview. Still a meeting outside jail would have been so much better.

Kamala was much the same. Holding on, even making some progress, but the disease has a terrible grip and does not seem to weaken much. It is a long, long struggle.

How long will I be permitted to visit her every two or three weeks? Perhaps not for long if she gets a little better. And even if am allowed to go sometimes, it will not be for 24 hours including the night. Well, well, it has been good to visit her—three times I have gone during the last two months and these visits have meant much to me and to her. If future visits are stopped or curtailed we shall carry on without them.

And Indu—she seems to get on well with the Santiniketan people. On the whole she is growing up well....

I learnt that Bapu is likely to return to prison before very long—probably some time this month.<sup>81</sup> It will be a good thing. But that of course means a tightening up still further of the coercive apparatus of Govt. That too is well. 1935 is likely to wax and wane & pass away before I get out of prison.

But today is New Year's Day—my sixth in prison—and the troubles that the future may hold seem far off. Why worry about them? Enough for the day &c. But today I feel strong & capable of carrying on. Today I feel light-hearted. Is that not enough and something to be thankful for? A good beginning for the New Year!

*Jan. 10, Thursday*

The interview came off today—Ranjit & Chand. It was a long interview, over two hours. Good news & bad but on the whole good. This rush of news, domestic & others, fills the mind and disturbs the detachment which jail produces. I have felt excited & disturbed ever since. It will take a couple of days at least before I settle down again. Meanwhile, I feel a little involved inevitably in various affairs and there is a longing to see Kamala again. I count the days.

81. Bhulabhai Desai was reported to have had talks with Mahatma Gandhi on the undesirability of his visiting the Frontier, even though no ban had been imposed on his entry. As early as 15 November 1934 Mahatma Gandhi had been in correspondence with the Viceroy who had expressed the undesirability of such a visit.



Madan & Shamji Mushran also visited Bhowali on Jan. 1st. What a pity I missed them. The fault was Madan's. He insisted on staying on at Kathgodam for his midday meal & so delayed the departure of the whole party including Ranjit. Of course they did not know that I was at Bhowali. Chand did not accompany Ranjit. She was sent on later when the snow fell. Kailas also came & the poor boy developed typhoid and was sent back to Lucknow in this condition.

Kamala doing fairly well, putting on weight &c. but still the A.P. treatment is not very successful.

Chand looked well.

### *Jan. 12, Saturday*

A terrible and unexpected shock. Early in the morning a telegram came from Nan from Allahabad that Jivraj Mehta had telephoned from Bombay to say that mother had had a stroke of paralysis and was unconscious. Nan was going immediately to Bombay. I held together for a while and then came the thought that I had seen the last of mother. Her face, charged with pain and emotion, as she said good-bye to me on Aug. 23rd, when I was rearrested and carried off to Naini, rose up before me vividly. As I was getting in the police car she ran up again to me with arms outstretched. That face haunted me. How she loved me and was wrapped up in me. She would ask my advice in the most trivial things and hold on to even a suggestion as if it was the final and inescapable truth. How she had suffered because of my long absences in prison and how she had bravely faced & endured not only this agony but the physical pain of a police lathi charge. She did this more for her love of father and me than for any principle. And yet there was also the pride not to submit.

I collapsed and wept and found some difficulty in pulling myself together. Poor little mother—what a tortured life she had led for many years—all her children in prison and so much happening that was painful. And now the end had come suddenly. Perhaps it was as well that it was sudden and perhaps painless. She would not recover from this stroke of paralysis at her age and in her weak state.

But it was hard to think that I would not see her again. I grow lonelier than ever. The home that father had built up so lovingly goes to pieces. Kamala lies ill in Bhowali—a long long illness with no cure in prospect, mother lying unconscious in Bombay, I in Almora jail.

What effect will this news have on Kamala!

Another telegram came from Bombay and it was slightly reassuring. But.....



Ranjit, I learnt, was still in Almora. He had visited Binsar yesterday and was now returning to Bhowali & thence to Allahabad. I sent him the two telegrams to see.

What will be Kamala's reaction? Will the bad news upset the slow building up of the last three months?

And even if mother holds on to life will it be as a semi-paralytic? That would be terrible. If she recovers consciousness, she will think of me and long to see me. But I am here at Almora.

I have shivered all day although it has not been as cold as usual. The wind is moaning through the pine trees a dismal note full of desolation. Or is it my mind that is desolate? I am losing most of the footholds I had. India, Allahabad—the mental bonds that tied me to them seem to loosen and I feel like an exile who cannot even look forward to a home anywhere. The moaning wind is a fit accompaniment to my mood. I am weary but there is no rest.

*Jan. 16, Wednesday*

Have been to Bhowali. A day of the outside world and then back again to Almora jail and my long and cheerless barrack which is so cold and bare and empty.

Kamala does not progress. The most she is doing is just to hold on. It is a brave fight with the odds against.

What a brick Feroze has been! Without him it would have been a terrible job to arrange for Kamala's stay in Bhowali.

Better news of mother. She is improving. I am told that Tej Bahadur Sapru sent a telegram to the Viceroy requesting that I should be transferred to Bombay. Today on my return to Almora from Bhowali I was asked by the superintendent if I would like to be sent to Bombay in case mother's condition was serious. The enquiry was being made by the Judicial Secretary of the U.P. Govt. I told him that certainly I would like to be by her side under these circumstances. Perhaps I shall not be sent just yet as she is said to be improving. And if I go what of Kamala? She has few companions now—indeed only Feroze & the nurse. Even her mother has gone accompanying Kailas when he fell ill.

If I go to Bombay how long will I be kept there? Today I finish eleven months—another thirteen months more! Am I going to be treated like a shuttlecock for these long months? What a life has fallen to my lot! Indu is full of dissatisfaction at the present college course at Santiniketan. Wants to chuck it up & devote more time to the Kala Bhawan & languages. I am sending her word to follow her bent....



How cold it is. Last night at Bhowali it froze hard. It is likely to do so here tonight. But Madan has sent me a gorgeous pair of khadi fur-lined slippers and gloves, and here I sit with them on and with an overcoat hugging a brazier full of cheerful warmth. And yet I shiver. I have also been told by Madan to swallow cod liver oil!

I am to go to Bhowali again on Jan. 31. The date has already been fixed. So to wait again for a fortnight and then have a brief vision and back again. Or perhaps before that I am shunted to Bombay.

*Jan. 22, Tuesday.*

Bad news of Kamala. She seems to be going down and down, slowly but unmistakably. The only treatment they have is failing. We carry on hopelessly....

I have felt miserable today and a longing to see her has obsessed me. Can I not be with her during these days which go by inexorably bringing the end nearer?

The brief visits I have paid her have been very precious to me and perhaps to her. We came nearer to each other than at any other time. We approach only to be parted—and parted for good? The possibilities of her bright young life stare me and mock at me. How much she could do for the larger cause, how much for me! Is that not to be? I could have her as a companion even if she remained an invalid if that were possible.

I have never felt quite so much the desire to go out of gaol, to be released.

What a terribly long time a fortnight is!

*25th January 1935*

बिजू फ़ोरी की शादी । मैंने तार भेजा ।<sup>82</sup>

*Jan. 29, Tuesday*

I have felt put out today by an item of news in the paper. Secret confabulations going on between the Congress & Jinnah representing the Moslem League.<sup>83</sup> Will people never learn?

82. Marriage of Bijju and Fory. I sent a telegram.

83. Newspapers reported that the Congress, the Muslim League and other parties were in close touch with each other to form a united front in order to reject the Joint Parliamentary Committee's Report.



...It has been raining all day and has been dark & dismal. Day after tomorrow I am to be taken to Bhowali—At last!

*Feb. 1, Friday*

I am back from Bhowali—an unhappy visit. I felt terribly miserable yesterday & this morning. Somehow things went wrong. Kamala was much the same physically—ups & downs in temperature but gaining weight slowly. But I felt there was a psychological change. She seemed reserved. I ignored this & talked on to her for long, read some of the stuff I had written, recited some favourite poems, and then she told me of her desire to give away to charity part of the proceeds of the sale of her jewellery. I was a little surprised as she had always looked upon this more or less as belonging to Indu. But of course I did not mind it in the least, only I criticised the proposed objects of her charity and suggested that she should give the matter more consideration.

And then she said that she wanted to realise God and give her thoughts to this, and as a preparation for this our relations should undergo some change. Apparently I was not to come in the way of God.

I was taken aback. I had known for long that she had been religiously inclined for some three years or more but it was all rather vague. It seemed to me very far from religion or search for God, whatever that may be, and much more a type of hysteria. This had long irritated me partly because this kind of thing does not appeal to me, partly, I suppose, my vanity was hurt when I found that I counted for less and less in her mental make-up. I seemed to be losing her—she was slipping away and I resented this and felt miserable. Many of our little tiffs during the past two years were due to this background of conflict. Even when I was out of jail for five months this shadow seemed to lie between us. It was not so much religion as such but a type of it which irritated me. I was kept very busy and could do nothing & indeed tried to do nothing. Naturally I told her that she had perfect freedom to think & act as she wanted to. I said so but I did not feel like it.

I came back to prison & the matter receded into the background. Then she fell ill.

Ever since I have been going to Bhowali, I have tried as gently but as persistently as possible to approach her mind, to explain to her my outlook. We have talked of science, psychology, religion, politics & economics in the larger sense, and I was beginning to hope that we were drawing nearer to each other. I looked forward tremendously to each visit. I felt attracted to her and a little fascinated by this mental adventure.



And then suddenly I saw that all my efforts had been wholly in vain. She was further away than ever from me and an almost unbridgeable chasm stretched out between us. She hardly seemed to realise the significance of what she had said. But I was struck dumb and an utter loneliness took possession of me. I left her early in the evening. She had nothing to say to me though I waited for some words, and I found it impossible to carry on our old conversations. What was the good when she hardly heeded them? And what was the good of protesting and arguing?

For long I sat on my bed. I wrote some letters. Then after midnight I left the house and wandered down the hill-side. It was very dark—a moonless night—but the stars were shining brightly, and after a while I could just grope my way about. There was an absolute and almost oppressive silence. Not a sound, not a breath of wind, only the faint humming of telegraph wires. It was cold but not very cold. I stumbled and groped along slowly gazing at the faint shapes of the mountains towering on every side and especially at the stars—how bright and changeless they were in a changing world!

The star-lit night gave me some peace but not much. I returned and sat & thought of the curious muddle my life was getting into. In politics I was an unhappy, lonely figure, and now even my home life was ending for me. Loneliness everywhere. Nothing to hold on to, no life-boats or planks to clutch while I struggled with the rising waters.

The morning brought no relief and it was a somewhat haggard looking and very miserable person who presented himself to Kamala. Later I told her something of what I had in my heart—a small part of it. I felt excessively sad and I communicated my misery to her. And then, as the time for my departure drew near, I thought it was all wrong to part with fearful faces. I made a brave effort to smile; it must have been a wan smile. Anyway we parted with cheerful words. But words do not take one far—The sting remained & is likely to remain. What am I to do? What is to be done?

There is nothing to be done for the present except to sit in this long prison barrack, all alone, and think what a dreadful thing life can be.

On my arrival here this afternoon from Bhowali a telegram was given to me. This morning Betty was delivered of a son in Bombay—Both doing well. I am glad this is over. And I am also glad it is a son. We have had too many daughters in the family.



February 4th, 1935<sup>84</sup>

Indu darling,

I have your letter. I am glad you had a pleasant little holiday on the island in the Ganges and enjoyed yourself swimming about in the river and wandering among the ruins of ancient temples. I had imagined, from something you had written, that you were going to Nalanda, the old university town in Bihar, where Hiuen Tsang went in the days of Harshavardhana.<sup>85</sup> Hence my mistake.

The snow was very pleasant to see and feel but it was a very temporary visitor and, like most good things, it left us too soon. The deodars and other trees laden with snowflakes were very beautiful and fairy-like. Snow whitens and beautifies even the ugly things of life, what then of those that have their own grace and beauty? But it vanished into nothing and it has not come again, and perhaps will not come again this winter, and we can only dream with the poet: Where are the snows of yester-year?

I thought so much of you and of Switzerland with the snow covering all my prison surroundings—the Hotel Mirabeau and you lying ill, and the Danish lady who sent you flowers (she was Danish not French). I sent her some flowers also and quite by accident I chose the Danish national colours—I did not even know at the time what they were. The old lady was so pleased at what she considered my delicate and graceful compliment to her nationality! And then Geneva with our flat there (I have forgotten the name of the street but I think the number was 46) and the Ecole Internationale; and Chesieres and Villars; and Montreux with its picture-like beauty with the Deuts du Midi towering high up beyond the castle of Chillon; and Chamonix and Mont Blanc; and your American camp by the lake-side (what was the name of the lake? How my memory fails me!) where you tried to learn swimming; and Bex; and the Etablissement Stephani at Montana.

How small you were then and how you have grown since, and what a lot has happened since then to all of us! Memories crowd back and fill the mind, memories of the past, especially in jail, where the present is too flat to offer any grip to the imagination and so the mind wanders back to the past or sometimes dreams of the future and builds magic

84. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

85. (c. 590-648)); king of Kanauj who became the most powerful ruler in north India.



castles in the air. Alas that these castles should be so ephemeral and, like the snow, should vanish so soon, leaving no trace behind!

I had quite forgotten that incident of the walking stick which you mention. But now I remember it and that village fair comes back to my mind, our climb up the mountain, and the people carrying their skis, and the crowds of holiday-makers in that expanse of snow.

There was much more snow round about Bhowali than here at Almora and Feroze had some exciting adventures. Ranjit *pupha* was there also then and Madan Bhai and they used to go out for long walks. At one place a pond was frozen over and Feroze tried to skate or rather slide on it. The ice broke up under his weight and he disappeared suddenly up to his waist in freezing water. It was a job to come out.

The winter seems to be passing and there is already a faint smell of the spring in the air. In another four days it will be *Vasanta Panchami*. Last year on this day mummie and I were in Santiniketan and the Chandas gave us a pretty little present for you must know that this is an important anniversary for both of us—we were married on that day! A year ago that was, and within a few days I was in prison and here I have been since then. Another year gone, another year still to pass. Heigh-ho!

The clouds are my favourite companions here and I watch them daily. Sometimes they pay me a visit in the shape of mist and they fill my barrack with a damp and sticky feeling, but it is not so bad. Usually they are high up assuming the most fantastic shapes. I fancy I see shapes of animals in them, elephants and camels and lions, and even little pigs. Or they resemble the porpoises that hop about in the sea, or fish lying side by side, almost like sardines in a tin. And then they would change suddenly and coalesce and look like a mighty ocean, and at other times like a beach. The wind rustling through the deodars helps the illusion for it sounds like the tide coming in and the waves breaking on a distant sea-front. It is a great game this watching of the clouds. Once I saw some whiffs of them floating about and I was immediately reminded of Sir Prabhashankar Pattani's<sup>86</sup> peroxide beard. It was really a remarkable likeness and I was highly amused and laughed to myself for a long time. Have you seen this famous beard? It is worth seeing. *Puphi*—the elder one—knows it well and so you had better tell her of my experience here.

86. (1862-1938); member, Bombay Legislative Council, 1916; Dewan, Bhavnagar state, 1902-12; attended the Round Table Conferences in 1930 and 1931.



We shall have flowers soon, the dainty gifts of the spring season, and the hill-sides will be covered with them, especially at Bhowali. Even here in my barrack-yard I hope to raise a few. Just at present last year's plants and shrubs look shrivelled up on account of the cold.

Some time back, when I was at Bhowali, mummie told me that you wanted to change your subjects and give up your present course. You were keen on giving more time to the Kala Bhawan and to languages. I asked Feroze to send you a message and also to write to Anil Kumar Chanda. I suggested that you might discuss the matter with Chanda and then make such alterations in your subjects as you think fit. I do not know if you got this message.

I am quite clear that if you have a clear bent in any direction, you should follow it. It is all wrong to spend too much time on subjects which do not interest. That is almost time wasted. Of course every cultured person must have some general knowledge about the world we live in and its problems. I have always attached importance to the study of science because without it, it is hardly possible to understand the modern world. But, as far as I can make out, you cannot do much in the way of science at Santiniketan. If you can carry on with chemistry, do so, but it is for you to decide. Biology is really more important than chemistry but they are all related together. I sent you a fat tome on biology by Wells a month ago,

If you are attracted to the Kala Bhawan I think it advisable for you to give more time to it. It is better to do something well than many things indifferently. There is also this to be said for it that art is the speciality of Santiniketan and Nandlal Bose is a fine artist and teacher. If the मास्टर मोशाय<sup>87</sup> thinks you are a promising pupil you should profit by his teaching as much as possible. This is a thing which you cannot easily have elsewhere.

Languages are also desirable and languages are tricky things after a certain age. You will find it far easier to learn a new language now than say five years later. As one grows the capacity for learning languages weakens tremendously. The best time of course is babyhood. As Miss Spiegel<sup>88</sup> (I refuse to call her by any other name. Why should people's names be changed?) is a good linguist, take advantage of this. I do not know what languages you are doing at present. Of the Indian languages I understand you are taking up Bengali and Hindi. French

87. *Master moshai*, respected teacher.

88. Dr. Margarete Spiegel; German lady who taught for some time at Santiniketan; she was a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi who renamed her as Amala.



of course you are taking and presumably English literature. Are you doing German also? I had no idea you were doing so but a mention of it in one of your letters made me think that you had taken it up. If you want to take it, do so by all means. It is for you to decide.

So you can build up your studies round the Kala Bhawan and languages and any other subjects you choose. It will be a good thing if you could discuss the matter with A.K. Chanda. He might be of help in making up a programme.

I am not at all keen on your taking any particular examination at Santiniketan. If they come in your way take them. You need not go out of your way for them. I look upon all these studies of yours as preparatory to specialization, probably in Europe, for some particular line of work. I do not yet know what your own desires are in regard to this or whether they are clearly formed yet. In the ordinary course you will remain at Santiniketan till the summer of 1936. If possible I should like to go with you and mummie then to Europe but it is quite impossible to make any plans so far ahead. There are so many indeterminate factors—mother's health, Dolamma's condition, my own entanglements etc. So for the present you had better not bother too much about the distant future and carry on at Santiniketan and learn as much as possible there.

You must have had news of Dolamma. She has been through a big crisis and although she is much better now, she has to be carefully watched and taken care of. At one time there was some talk of my being transferred to a Bombay jail so that I might see her. But now that she is a little better there is no immediate chance of my being sent. It is proposed to keep her in Bombay till the end of March and then to bring her to Allahabad. After ten days or so there the idea is to take her to Bhowali. If all goes well she ought to come up about the middle of April.

It is quite possible that Ranjit *pupha* and *puphi* and the children might also come up for the summer to these hills, probably somewhere near Almora. Ranjit has taken a fancy to a house in a beautiful spot about 14 miles from Almora. It is much higher up and commands a magnificent view of the snows but it is far from civilization and rather desolate.

Perhaps Raja and *chhoti puphi* might also come up. They will certainly come to see me for I have not had a glimpse of them for a long time. And then there is the bawling infant who has to be displayed. You know of course of the new arrival who appeared in this

world on the morning of February 1st. *Bari puphi* must have been greatly relieved that the newcomer was a son. Our family has had too many daughters already for her taste!

Your next holidays, I suppose, begin in May. It is so long since I saw you and May seems to be a terrible distance off. However the months will pass and then I hope you will come up to Bhowali and pay a visit to your Papu in Almora jail.

Upadhyaya will probably be coming up to Bhowali soon.

I hope you are keeping well. I want you not merely to keep well but to be aggressively fit and, as far as possible, to make yourself impervious to disease. What a terrible waste of energy is illness and how it disables us from doing useful work! One does not think about it much in one's youth but it is worthwhile doing so. A little care now might make such a lot of difference later on. Many people take various tonics but really the best thing, especially in youth, to build up a strong body is cod liver oil. Horrible stuff you will say and I entirely agree with you. But there is a very good substitute—halibut liver oil. This is as bad but the great advantage is that one has only to take two or three drops of this instead of the huge quantities of cod liver oil. It is quite easy to put these drops in any liquid or solid and not feel the taste. Even I have started taking them regularly! I would be glad if you followed your father's example in this respect at least. Ask your doctor there and tell him to get it for you from Calcutta. You can also get it in capsules or in a malt mixture. It is called Crooke's Colossal Halibut Liver Oil. I am sure it will do you a deal of good and make you strong and capable of resisting any disease.

I am glad you read *The Art of Thinking*. It is by an Abbe (Dimnet I think), is it not? I read it some time ago and liked it. Do let me know from time to time what books you read. I am interested in books. And should you at any time want me to send you interesting books I shall gladly do so. Even from Almora jail I can reach out for them.

Is Leena Sarabhai<sup>89</sup> studying at Santiniketan? Or did she merely come to dance? I saw her dance four years ago in Ahmedabad and liked it very much. She must have grown a lot since then. She was plump enough then.

Gurudev must be going to Allahabad soon. When he returns give him my regards and love.

89. Daughter of Ambalal Sarabhai.



Who pays your college account? Is this done from Bombay or Allahabad? Mummie doesn't know. And do you get any pocket money? You must not run short of pocket cash.

This is a fairly long letter but then I don't write to you very often, do I?

With all my love,

Your loving  
Papū

5th February 1935

इन्दु को खत भेजा (कमला के मारफत)<sup>90</sup>

February 6, 1935. Wednesday

Father's death anniversary—Four years!

I have felt a little calmer and more composed. I went back to the writing of *In and Out of Prison* and the concentration of mind necessary for this made me forget my own troubles and worries. I feel better but still sad and weary.

I had a strange dream last night. We were living in the old Anand Bhawan—(Swaraj Bhawan now) and Kamala was unwell. Something happened—I have forgotten already what this was—and Kamala decided to leave me! Indeed she went off. I am not clear if she went alone or with someone. I followed her to the Allahabad station but I do not seem to have met with success there. What a curious mix-up is one's mind!

I read in the *Manchester Guardian* today Hoare's answer to Maxton about my release. He repeated that he did not see his way to it. I was given every facility to see my wife—once or twice a week. I wish I was.

Well, I suppose another year will go by somehow just as one year is almost past. What could I do if I was out? Nothing much. I would sit quietly at Bhowali. But that would be good for Kamala and for me.

Meanwhile Sastri grows lyrical & hysterical over the virtues of the British connection, & Sapru chants the praises of King George & blesses the jubilee. It takes all sorts to make this world!

90. Sent letter to Indu (c/o Kamala).

12th February 1935

Anniversary of my arrest!—one year over.

February 14, Thursday

News of Kamala has not been good and I have been depressed. Yesterday slightly better news, not much but enough to cheer me a little.

I have hardly read since my return from Bhowali. *In and Out of Prison* has absorbed my attention. I decided to push on with it and during the last 12 days I wrote 92 pages, and today, at last, I finished it! 976 pages of manuscript in all. I feel as if a weight was off me. How it has kept my mind busy for many months! What shall I do next? Reading by itself is not good enough. But for some weeks I shall read and read—I have been neglecting books lately. I have ordered a large supply.

A letter from Indu came today, it cheered me—also one from Nan—all about the advent into the world of my new nephew!

Altogether I feel much better today and I am looking forward eagerly to my next visit to Bhowali. It will be two weeks tomorrow since my return but no fresh date has so far been fixed.

February 17, Sunday

I am fed up. Waiting, waiting for the summons from Bhowali, but no message has come. I felt distracted today and could not do any serious work. Spent the day in a general clean-up of everything. Feel very lonely.

February 18, Monday

The call has come. I go to Bhowali tomorrow morning. For days past I have revolved in my mind how to meet Kamala—what to say to her. As my moods changed my imaginary conversation changed also. I feel in good mood this evening and I hope that I shall behave tomorrow.

Feb. 21, Thursday

I went to Bhowali on Tuesday & returned yesterday. A curious visit—Long talks with K—sometimes irritating and disturbing; at other times soothing. How very child-like she is! Feroze suddenly developed



violent pains early in the night and I sat up with him for several hours. A tiring night with little sleep.

Visited the sanatorium the next morning and more or less decided that K was to move there next month. Probably I shall have to go to Bhowali soon again—on the 1st March—to fix this transfer up.

Reached Almora very tired and sleepy.

A number of new books have come. Interesting and attractive.

February 22, 1935<sup>91</sup>

Darling Indu,

I have your letter. I am glad you have fixed up your subjects in consultation with Kripalani. Your choice seems to be as good as was possible in Santiniketan. I do not quite understand what you mean by reading history by yourself. It is such an enormous ocean that one is rather apt to get lost in it without some expert help. Perhaps you will get this help from some of the professors there. Classes are really far less important than this personal guidance from good professors. Indeed at Cambridge we attached little importance to the university lectures; far more helpful is the help given by college tutors, as they are called. This really applies to every subject—literature, politics, economics. I do not know if there is any such system obtaining at Santiniketan or whether the professors do this job apart from professing in classes. Even if the system does not prevail there is no reason why you should not seek help from time to time from your professors. Kripalani, for instance, will always be helpful.

You have accepted my suggestion that I should send you books from time to time. I shall do so. And yet when I came to think what I should send you, I was a little puzzled. Most of the books I get here are new books, just published. Some of them are good, and yet I wonder how many will survive after a few years. There was an old rule that was dinned into me when I was about your age: don't read books less than fifty years old. The idea obviously was that a lapse of that period will sift the good from the bad and the indifferent, and if a book survived, it was likely to be worth reading. It was a good rule. It cannot of course apply to scientific, historical, political, economic and similar subjects, in which continuous research work is resulting in an addition of knowledge. In these subjects such rapid changes are being made nowadays that a book written a generation

91. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



back is completely out of date, though it may be interesting and important from other points of view. But in pure literature it is perfectly true that the avalanche of books that is descending on us in these days is very largely trash and it is not easy to separate the chaff from the grain. It is far safer to read the famous classics of old which have influenced thought and writing for so long. With that background it is easier to exercise a wise choice in modern literature. We must not of course ignore modern books for without them we cannot understand our own age and its inner conflicts.

Then again the reading of books depends so much on the individual—his or her general tastes as well as special moods. To enjoy a book one must not be forced to read it as a duty. That is the surest way of disliking it as well as developing a prejudice against all reading. Our examinations and text-books often have this result. Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Moliere, Victor Hugo etc. become terrible bores because of this association with examinations. And yet what wonderful stuff they have written!

I have yet another difficulty. Youth likes one kind of book, middle age another kind, and old age yet a third kind. As a boy I loved Scott's novels and Tennyson's poems. I could hardly stand them now. Then I became passionately fond of Swinburne and Shelley; my enthusiasm for them has considerably abated. Must I therefore, in recommending books to you, think of my youthful tastes or my present tastes? Probably neither would be a safe guide. What I would like to know is what books you read and how you like them. Do you like poetry and if so who are your favourite poets? Do you like history—sociology—current affairs—economics? Fiction—historical novels—utopias—essays? And so on. If you would write to me about these matters I could keep in touch with your mental moods and development and I would then find it easier to suggest further reading. I do not want to thrust books on you which you do not like.

Any outstanding new book that I come across, and that I think will interest you, I shall send you. Meanwhile I shall mention a number of good books and leave you to choose from them. As they are all well-known classics you ought to have them in your college library. If they are not there I can have any you want sent from Allahabad.

Most of Plato's books are very interesting and thought provoking. Try one of them—say the *Republic*—and see how you like it. The old Greek plays are also fascinating. Some of them are so powerful that they make one shiver almost. Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus for tragedies—Aristophanes for delightful comedies. The plays are short and easy to read. There are many good English translations. And



talking of plays—have you read *Shakuntala*? Not of course in Kalidas's<sup>92</sup> original but in translation. It is worth reading.

Shakespeare again makes fascinating reading if one takes to him for pure pleasure and not for examination stunts. And his sonnets are extraordinarily beautiful.

I do not know if you are keen on poetry. I see that you have been studying Walt Whitman and Browning—excellent persons but not poets after my heart. Modern poetry is very different—some good, some totally incomprehensible to me. The most lyrical and musical of modern English poets is Walter de la Mare. I have just been reading him.

When we were together in Anand Bhawan last August you told me that you would read Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Did you read it? It is supposed to be one of the greatest of novels. Another great novel by Tolstoy is *Anna Karenina*. Have you read much of Thackeray or Dickens? They are rather old-fashioned now but I remember how I used to enjoy them in the old days. You should certainly read Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, a story of Waterloo days.

I have always been interested in utopias and books peeping into the future. William Morris's *News from Nowhere* was an early favourite of mine. Then there is Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, and a fairly recent book by H.G. Wells: *Men Like Gods*.

Bernard Shaw you have read a little. Read more of him. Almost all his plays are worth it and his prefaces to these plays are equally important.

A favourite author of mine is Bertrand Russell. He writes beautiful English and he is eminently sensible. I think you will like him. Except for his philosophical and mathematical books, you can take up any of his works.

This is just a brief list which strikes me at the moment. I can go on adding to it but for the time being I shall stop and leave you to make your choice. Probably within a few days you will get the 2nd volume of *Glimpses* and you might honour it with a perusal, though I am told it is unconscionably long. Perhaps, if I am provoked, I might write another book for you!

Why does one read books? To instruct oneself, amuse oneself, train one's mind etc. etc.—Certainly all this and much more. Ultimately it is to understand life with its thousand facets and to learn

92. Dramatist and poet of the fifth century A.D. who wrote the Sanskrit dramas, *Shakuntala*, *Vikramorvasi* and *Malavikagnimitra*, and two long poems, *Raghuvamsha* and *Kumarasambhava*.



how to live life. Our individual experiences are so narrow and limited, if we were to rely on them alone we would also remain narrow and limited. But books give us the experiences and thoughts of innumerable others, often the wisest of their generation, and lift us out of our narrow ruts. Gradually as we go up the mountain sides fresh vistas come into view, our vision extends further and further, and a sense of proportion comes to us. We are not overwhelmed by our petty and often transient loves and hates and we see them for what they are—petty and hardly noticeable ripples on the immense ocean of life. For all of us it is worthwhile to develop this larger vision for it enables us to see life whole and to live it well. But for those who cherish the thought of rising above the common herd of unthinking humanity and playing a brave part in life's journey, this vision and sense of proportion are essential to keep us on the right path and steady us when storms and heavy winds bear down on us.

'Hear, hear', I seem to hear you say, 'to these pious and noble sentiments, but why inflict them in a letter?' I agree with you—my pen strayed and it is admonished.

We shall return to a more profitable subject. I have been watching the kites here a good deal. There is a wide expanse of sky and quite fifty kites round about here. Everyday they crowd right over this little gaol, when the prisoners are fed, in the hope of getting scraps of bread. What is more interesting is to watch them glide gracefully high above almost without effort. Sometimes they rush past at amazing speed borne by a current of air, or they go up and up, or swoop down at quite a tremendous pace. They seldom exert themselves, except to steer by their tails, and to balance themselves. The rest they leave to the wind. I can almost chalk the air currents above me by watching these kites. Do you know much about 'gliding'—the new form of flying on light little aeroplanes without engines? This is based entirely on the knowledge and use of these air currents. There being no engine, there is no motive power behind the plane. It has to rely entirely on the wind and air currents. It is very light and usually has a single pilot, or at most two, whose function is to balance and to nose out the currents which lift him up. Then he gradually glides down till he is fortunate enough to pick up another upward current. People have flown twenty and thirty miles or more in this way. It is perfectly soundless flying—there being no engine—very like a bird. There is not very much danger in it as usually the plane glides down slowly to the ground. There is just a chance of course of a collision against a tree or telegraph wires or a house. This gliding is now taught in a large number of schools in Europe and America,



especially in Germany. It is fairly cheap, as the simple planes cost little. It is excellent training for boys and girls, both for their nerves and to make them efficient pilots of real aeroplanes later on. Why should not Santiniketan start a gliding class? Suggest it to the authorities. But I am afraid this innovation will not be welcomed by them.

Perhaps you are right about the cod liver oil. The summer in the plains is not a suitable time for it. Why not swallow pangaduine instead?

I went to Bhowali a few days ago. We have almost fixed on certain changes. The final touches will be given when I go there next. It is proposed to transfer mummie from Chandra Bhawan to a cottage in the sanatorium itself. I visited the sanatorium and liked their little cottage. I think the sanatorium regime will be good for mummie and I hope she will improve rapidly there. She will not have quite so much company there and might feel a little dull but her treatment will benefit. The nurse will live with her there and if necessary one other person can share the nurse's room. It is probable that quite a number of our family members will be coming up in summer and it will be better for them, as well as for mummie, if she lived quietly in the sanatorium and saw visitors at fixed hours every day.

We are thinking of leaving our present cottages—Chandra Bhawan etc.—and taking two other cottages. These latter are just above the Royal Oak Hotel. They are not so well situated but there are certain advantages. They are situated on a good bit of level ground and there is a plentiful water supply. And then they are much cheaper. They are just the same size as the old cottages. Dolamma when she comes up in April can occupy one of these cottages and *chhoti puphi* (with the brat) the other. You and others who come can fit in either of these. I should like *chhoti puphi* to stay in Bhowali for some time. This will be good for her and the kid. I do not know if she will like making a long stay in such a quiet place. Ranjit *pupha* intends, I believe, taking a house in Binsar, high up above Almora. It must be delightful there but it is a wilderness. I have suggested to him to make a trip to the Pindari glacier. If he fixes this up I hope you will also go, and I shall renew my acquaintance with it vicariously through you. It is thirty five or thirty six years since I went there! I was about nine years old then.

I understand there is a great argument going on in Bombay as to what name should be given to the son and heir. Two names have been especially selected: Rahula and Harsha. I like both. I think Harsha is better in some ways; I like its meaning and its sound. But it is fairly common. Rahula has the advantage of being rather uncommon

and its association (being the name of Buddha's son) is in its favour also. I know only one Rahula and he is a very delightful and learned scholar who is a Buddhist monk and knows any number of out-of-the-way languages. So I find it a little difficult to choose. Harsha reminds me of some famous lines by Blake<sup>93</sup>—Do you know them?

'I have no name:

Pretty joy!

I am but two days old.'

Sweet joy but two days old,

What shall I call thee?

Sweet joy I call thee:

'I happy am,

Thou dost smile,

Joy is my name.'

I sing the while

Sweet joy befall thee!

Sweet joy befall thee!

Send these lines to *chhoti puphi* and tell her that I have so far been unable to choose between the two names. If she and Raja have no marked preference, why not toss for it?

When does your term end? Early in May I suppose. Do you have any terminal examinations?

All my love,

Your loving  
Papu

March 3, Sunday

Went to Bhowali on Friday—returned Saturday (yesterday). Madan there. Visits to sanatorium. Tremendous to-do as to whether K was to shift there or not. Suddenly she developed a strong disinclination to change over, just when it was the decided opinion of doctors and others that she should go. I would place all the reasons why she should shift, and they seemed to me overwhelming and quite unanswerable. She would agree unwillingly and five minutes later some irrepressible instinct would make her change her mind. It was curious how strong this desire of hers was. It would bubble up repeatedly, hop out in spite of all attempts at reason. Ultimately she agreed. I presume she will stick to this decision.

How curious is life! I seem to be learning its mysterious ways still and my wonder grows. It is overwhelming at times and how it mocks! I have returned from Bhowali full of strange thoughts and feelings which I hardly dare put down in black & white. There is a sense of emptiness & loneliness and yet there is also some relief from the tension of past days. At least I feel I know what the trouble is which

93. William Blake (1757-1827); English mystic, poet and artist. The quotation is from *Songs of Experience* (*Infant Joy*).



caused this tension. Understanding is often painful but it is better than a blind search for something which eludes one. And yet I do not know—so many fresh mysteries crop up. So many dark alleys leading I know not where. What can one do except to keep calm and preserve an untroubled exterior and wait for life's playful fantasies to develop? What can one do anyway in prison? At least one can read Blake:

Never seek to tell thy love,  
Love that never told can be;  
For the gentle wind does move  
Silently, invisibly.

The flowers are in evidence everywhere. The plum trees are covered with white blossoms—the whole tree looks like a bouquet from a little distance. So also the peach tree with its mauve-coloured flowers. And then there is an extraordinary flower, red as blood, growing in bunches on big trees and hanging like a Japanese lantern. It looks so artificial. It is vivid against the greenery of the leaves and one can spot the tree from a considerable distance. There are so many other flowers appearing—buttercups and daisies and *sarson* and others whose names even I don't know.

New birds also are appearing—Sometimes strangers visit my barrack—on my way to Bhowali I pass very beautiful Himalayan birds.

Human beings, birds, flowers—each growing in its own way, mysteriously fitting in into this strange pattern that is life.

*March 5, Tuesday*

A thought came to me yesterday that Madan Atal should accompany Kamala to Europe if she has to go soon. The problem of a companion had seemed insoluble and I had previously imagined that I was the sole possibility. And I was in prison. Madan had suggested that Govt. might be informed, informally and through the 'friends' who delight in such tasks, of the position. On some previous occasion Andrews had said that Govt. were willing to let me out for the purpose of accompanying Kamala to Europe. I was alarmed at Madan's suggestion and I begged him not to whisper it to anyone. Even hints of this kind assume extraordinary shapes.

But the question troubled me. What if it is desirable for K to be sent over soon—in May before the monsoon? There was a chance of this if her condition deteriorated during the next 2 months. That was the upshot of the conversation I had with Kacker & Madan.



What was to be done? There was me—and Indu—and mother, weak and ailing and liable at any moment to a relapse. And then the brilliant thought struck me that Madan might go with K. This resolved most of my present difficulties. Indeed I preferred his going to my going, even if I was free to do so. I think it will be a good thing for me to be away from K for a while. But if I am let out I can hardly remain behind and let her go with someone else. I want to go of course—I want very much to be with her and yet.....perhaps it would be well if I kept away from her for a while. And yet I don't know. I feel at sea in this strange world.

However all these questions do not arise at present and so long as I am in prison. I was eager to write to Madan and tell him of my new idea. I asked the Supt. for permission to write a special letter to him. On this being granted, I wrote to Madan today. I feel a little lighter.

It is three days since I came back from Bhowali. It seems such a long time ago. I want to go there again and yet there is not quite the same desire to do so as I used to have.....

Heigh-ho!

How could I dream that I

With my two hands should touch the sky?

*March 6, Wednesday*

Another earthquake experience! Early this morning I woke up with a start. I felt that somebody was shaking me and I was rolling in bed. I soon realised that it was an earthquake. A shower of loose earth descended on my bed from the roof, also a few small pebbles. The sparrows made a great noise and fluttered about in the dark. One of them fell quite near my bed and I found in the morning that it had deposited an egg.

For an instant I thought that I ought to get up for safety's sake. But where was I to go? I was locked up and the danger, if any, would not be less in any other part of my barrack. So why trouble to leave my bed when I was warm and comfortable? If anything was going to happen I might as well face it calmly and comfortably in bed. So I remained where I was and for a minute or two covered my head to protect myself from the loose earth and pebbles that were falling. Probably it would have been somewhat safer to get *under* the bed. But that seemed undignified and anyway it could make little difference.



Probably the shocks lasted a minute or two or perhaps more, as I may have been asleep for part of the time. When it passed off I saw the time. It was 3.48 a.m. And then I wondered what other places had experienced. It was a fairly severe shock here. It might have been far worse elsewhere—What of Kamala? What of the cities in the plains? Was this another great catastrophe like the one a year ago? I was troubled and then I dozed off. I must wait for two days before the paper brings definite news.

I have received a large number of flower seeds and bulbs from Pochas<sup>94</sup> and I am taking more interest in gardening. My yard ought to blossom out in many colours after a few months. Will I be here then?

Time seems to go slowly. It is only four days since I was at Bhowali and already it seems an age. I want to go back so much.

### *March 10 Sunday*

No news of Kamala although it is eight days since I left her and the doctor is supposed to write to me twice a week. I am worried—I do not know if any hitch has occurred in the carrying out of her transfer to the sanatorium.

Today's paper contained many references to me. Questions in the Assembly—an A.P. message that the U.P. Government are prepared to release me if I want to accompany Kamala to Europe. Ifs & buts. I don't want to go out on any such condition—but what am I to do? I want to go to Europe—out of India—for a while for my own sake and even apart from Kamala. But there is mother and I would hate to leave her in her present condition. Then Indu—what of her? Another thought worries me—the political situation. It is not a pleasant thought that so many of my colleagues are in trouble, in jail and outside, and I am deserting them. I don't suppose I could do anything, but one's presence and accessibility is something after all. Ordinarily I would have liked to be out for a few months and to meet friends and colleagues and have good discussions with them. Meanwhile mother might improve and Kamala get a little stronger. In October or thereabouts K and I and Indu might have sailed.

I have developed quite a passion for gardening. For many days I have spent the whole morning and a good part of the afternoon digging or transplanting or generally messing about the yard that is attached to my cell. The immediate provocation was the arrival of

94. A well-known seed merchant in Poona.

bulbs & seeds from Pochas. Probably I shall not remain here to see the flowers come out. Meanwhile I tire myself out and feel much fitter than I have done for long. How much better is this kind of natural exercise than jerks and other artificial exercises!

I have been doing little reading. I have revised *In and Out*—I have also read Vivekananda's *Jnana Yoga*—lectures delivered in Europe. I was much interested in him and should like to read more of him.

*March 12, Tuesday*

Still no news from Bhowali. I wonder if Kacker is annoyed and shows his resentment in this way. There is also no mention of the date of my next visit.

Govt. have contradicted the press statement that they are prepared to release me to accompany Kamala to Europe. That does not mean much and I think that if occasion arose they would let me go. Still I was a little irritated by the announcement.

But then I welcomed it. It saves me from an embarrassing position. It is becoming clearer to me that I have no business to leave India at this stage. It is almost like deserting one's colleagues. Speeches by Aney & Bhulabhai Desai<sup>95</sup> in the Assembly make most painful reading.<sup>96</sup> And Bapu? He is writing long articles on the relative merits of cow's milk & buffalo's milk! And of course the injury done by eating mill-ground rice and sugar. These are the great planks of village uplift.

*March 19, Tuesday*

I went to Bhowali on Friday last, the 15th, and returned the next day. Kamala in the sanatorium. I spent the night in the sanatorium guest house.

95. (1877-1946); leading lawyer of Bombay; advocate general, 1926; joined Congress in 1930; member, Congress Working Committee, 1934-35; leader of the Congress Party in the Central Legislative Assembly, 1934-39; played a prominent part as defence lawyer in I.N.A. trial in 1946.

96. Aney stated in the Legislative Assembly on 8 March 1935 that the continuance of repression by the government in the face of the withdrawal of civil disobedience would create a "spirit of hostility" and retard the "day of reconciliation and mutual cooperation". Bhulabhai stated that the establishment of self-government in India "consistent with the interests of India and England" would make direct action "a thing of the past".



Found K fairly well. Her weight well up. She has actually gained 16 or 17 lbs. since she came up in October. A hopeful sign. Oddly enough I have lost about the same amount since I came to gaol last year in Alipore. I am about 124 lbs. now. So we are approaching each other!

K. fairly cheerful. Had a good talk with her. She is keen on going to Europe. If she improves, as I hope she will, this may not be necessary in the near future. But I am making arrangements nevertheless in the event of a contingency arising. Madan is agreeable to accompanying her. At first I did not think that Indu should go with her but now I am inclined to change my opinion. She might as well go now as later. Her company will be helpful to K. And the expense of sending a nurse will be saved.

What a child K is! That irritates me often enough and yet I think that is partly her charm. How my moods change when I think of her. How much she means to me and yet how little she fits in or tries to fit in with my ideas. That is really the irritating part, that she does not try, and so she drifts apart.

I have been feeling somewhat unhappy for the last two or three days. This morning I was peculiarly ungracious to my prison helpers, for no fault of their own. I feel better this evening.

Partly my depression is due to physical reasons, I suppose. I have not been feeling up to the mark lately. Little exercise. The digging has ended as there is nothing left to dig. It is much warmer too and the sun is unpleasantly warm to work in or even to walk about in the open. My poor flowers are wilting for lack of water, for water is already scarce here.

It is pleasant in the early mornings when I am unlocked at 6 a.m. Just before the sun comes out it is cool and delightful. In the evening locking up time is still about 5-30 p.m. when the sun is blazing away. It is hardly possible to walk much before I am confined to my barrack.

How ignorant I am! The big red flowers I had admired so much on my way to Bhowali are the rhododendrons. I had heard and read of these often enough but I did not know what they were. The trees are full of them now and they stand out brightly on the hill-sides—patches of vivid colour, to be seen from long distances. The peach and the plum continue to be in evidence—mauve and white bouquets lining the road, or peeping out from a distance. The fresh leaves are coming out on many of the trees. Pinky-red and delicate-looking, they are like human babies, rather like the autumn tints. But these shades pass rapidly as the leaves grow older and become green.

I have grown very lazy. I sleep a lot and read casually. Having finished my writing job I seem to be at a loose end. Shall I take on some other writing work? But what shall I write about? For the present I shall drift along and concentrate on reading.

No letter from Indu for a long time. How she forgets me! And then she sends a delightful letter which pleases me immensely.

Thirteen months gone—eleven more to get through. It is a long time. When will I go out? And what will I do when I am out? Subhas seems to be writing a deal of nonsense. He can only think in terms of being himself a Mussolini.

Tomorrow is *Holi*.

March 22, 1935<sup>97</sup>

Darling Indu,

It is just over five weeks since I received your last letter, and because yours is the only letter mummie sends on to me here, I have received no letter at all, from her or through her, for this period. It is rather odd that I cannot take advantage even of the privilege of receiving letters every fortnight that I am allowed. Fortunately I have been able to see her twice during this period and so have had some news. But for this I would have been completely cut off from the family.

These visits to Bhowali are very precious to me and I look forward to them and count the days. It is a tiring journey but every fortnight the change in the weather brings changes in the trees and vegetation. The rhododendrons appeared about six weeks ago—large groups of beautiful blood-red flowers hanging on to the branches of big green trees. Almost artificial they seemed, like Japanese or Chinese lanterns hung to decorate the tree. I did not recognize them at first—foolish me!—although I had read often enough about them. But then a Cambridge degree in botany is not much of a passport to a knowledge of flowers! We are told all about the families and natural orders of these flowers, and we mess about with algae and fungi, and watch weird minute animals through the microscope; but in this preparation for examinations and quest for a degree we miss often enough the beauty and radiance of flowers. Do you know the lines:

A primrose by the river's brim,  
A little primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more.



But to go back to the rhododendrons. There were few flowers at first in the trees and that gave an air of artificiality. But now they crowd the branches and vivid patches of red stand out on the distant hill-sides. There are other colours also—the whitish plum-blossoms and the mauve flowers of the peach, both spurting out almost directly from the stem and looking like giant bouquets. And then there are so many odd flowers just peeping out at a strange world. There are daisies and buttercups, or something like them. And yellow *sarson* (सरसों)<sup>98</sup> flowers, emblems of *Vasanta*. Unhappily I do not even know the names of most of the flowers I see growing wild. That does not lessen my enjoyment of them but to know a flower by name does add to the intimacy and gives a sense of companionship.

I had a bright idea over a month ago. Why not stick flower seeds in my yard here and bring colour and variety to it? So that when you come to see me next time you may have an agreeable surprise and take away a bouquet of fresh flowers. So I asked Upadhyaya to write to your friend the Pochas for a packet of seeds to be sent to me direct and another packet for Bhowali. Pochas sent these packets and added as a gift to me, it appears, some valuable dahlia and gladioli bulbs. We stuck some of these seeds and bulbs in boxes and beds here and the superfluous ones I passed on to Bhowali. They have got a big collection of these there now and I suppose the sanatorium will profit by most of them. I have asked them to stick them round about mummie's cottage. Some will go to the two new cottages we have engaged.

Here in the Almora jail, as soon as the seeds arrived, there was a mighty digging in my yard. I spent nearly the whole day with spade or shovel, or some other appropriate gardening tool, digging away and messing about with the cool soft earth. There were a vast number of stones unearthed, naturally enough as this is hilly country. And so we prepared the beds for the flowers that were to come and waited patiently for them to grow in their little wooden boxes. This energetic digging and gardening was quite heavy physical labour for some days and I was tired out in the evenings. I hardly read for sometime. The hard part of the job is done now and we wait and wait. I am afraid most of the flowers will not be in evidence till the rains. So don't look forward to too much of a surprise when you visit me next.

The spring has not only brought flowers to the hill-sides, it has brought also many birds, some of them very beautiful Himalayan varieties which are quite unknown to me. I pass them sometimes on my way to Bhowali, and the tamer varieties visit my prison yard occasionally.

98. Mustard.



There is one delightful creature, daintiness and liveliness and 'spirit' personified. Various shades of delicate grays run along its body, and a black collar surrounds its neck, and there is a little white cap with two sparkling black eyes staring out of the rim of this cap. The whole shape of the bird is rather like the outline of a human eye, and as it hops about incessantly, a merry and roving eye it seems. I do not know the bird's name but the villagers call it *khanjan* or vulgarly and very unpoetically the *dhobin* धोबिन because it comes to the plains just before the monsoon. I remember its visits in our barrack in Naini prison nearly five years ago and since then I have seen it in other gaols. And yet, strangely enough, I do not remember seeing it outside prison! Probably I am too much occupied with other affairs when I am outside to pay attention to flowers and birds. But in prison they come back to me and chide me for my inconstancy, but do not punish me for it, and we become friends again.

I am told that a report about my narrow escape from sudden death has been broadcast in some of the papers. What an amazing capacity these newspapers have for making a mountain out of a mole-hill! A telegram offering thanks to the Almighty for my providential escape was even sent to me by Kasturbhai Lalbhai.<sup>99</sup> It was a needless waste of thanks which Kasturbhai's keen business instincts should have prevented him from indulging in. I was and am perfectly sound and fit. On the night we had the earthquake shock—it was the 6th March—I woke up suddenly and felt as if I was being shaken up by someone. There being no one about, and indeed there could be no one as I was locked up, I realized soon enough that our mother earth was shivering slightly. Even a slight shiver however might have unhappy consequences. A little loose earth, some plaster, a few tiny pebbles got detached from the roof and fell on my bed. It was nothing much but the idea did occur to me that the roof itself might choose to improve its acquaintance with me by descending upon me and having a look at me at closer quarters. This was not unlikely as the roof is a moth-eaten and rickety affair. For an instant I thought of getting out of bed—foolish thought. I was locked in and could not go out and bed was as good and safe a place as any other corner of my barrack-room. And it was certainly more comfortable. So I snuggled in and covered my head with a sheet, because of the loose earth coming down, and awaited developments. Having made a virtue of necessity, I patted myself, metaphorically, on the back for the calmness and

99. (b. 1894); an industrialist of Ahmedabad.



clear-headedness with which I awaited the collapse of the roof. But all in vain. The wretched roof refused to collapse and soon the shock passed by and, regretfully, I fell asleep again.

I was reading the other day about a diary of an infant prodigy. She was a little girl, Margaret Fleming,<sup>100</sup> who lived over a hundred years ago, and was a favourite of Sir Walter Scott. She knew a great deal of Shakespeare, the Bible, Burns, Swift and Gray by heart and was herself a bit of a poet. She also wrote a diary, which has recently been published, and this is quite a unique little book as tiny girls do not usually write down their thoughts in a diary. And she did all this before she was eight, for she died at the age of eight! A couplet she wrote has become quite famous. This was an epitaph on the untimely death of three small turkeys and it described the imperturbability of the mother turkey at the death of her progeny. The last two lines of this epitaph are:

But she was more than usual calm,  
She did not give a single dam.

Having filled a number of sheets with wholly unnecessary and unimportant chatter about flowers and birds and digging and earthquakes and a prig of a girl, I now come to more important matters which concern you and me. But sometimes, I wonder if the so-called unnecessary things of this world are not more important after all than those which seem to loom large before us. Life would be dull without them, a dreary business always occupied with 'practical' ends which seldom give much joy.

Mummie, you know, is now in the sanatorium. Perhaps you saw in the papers that there was some talk of her going to Europe for treatment in the near future. This was mostly talk and it is all very indefinite. The doctors were of opinion that although she had made substantial progress since she came to Bhowali, there was a possibility of the progress stopping as they were unable to continue the A.P. treatment. They still hoped to push her along the road to health and, in particular, they were going to try a new treatment which had come by air mail from Europe. It was just possible that this treatment might do her much good. There was the possibility, however, of nothing much happening and, in such an event, the next step in treatment, perhaps involving an operation, would lie in Europe. They said that the next two months would show how she was progressing and we could decide finally then.

100. Margaret or Marjorie Fleming (1803-1811).



I hoped and hope that she would progress rapidly and not be compelled to go to Europe rather suddenly this summer. Her having to go soon was far from convenient for me and my plans. But if her treatment required it, it was obviously desirable that she should go without delay. As there was this possibility I set about making some provisional and preliminary arrangements. The first question was about her companion. As I was out of the question, the only other person I could think of was Madan Bhai. Both as a doctor and a friend, he seemed to be a suitable person, and so I asked him to keep ready in case of need.

Then I thought of you. Should you accompany her? There were advantages and disadvantages and I was at first inclined to think that perhaps you had better stay behind for the present. You could of course go immediately if any special necessity arose. The journey takes less than a week now by air. On reconsideration I changed my opinion. You would be of help to her on the way and if you did not go, it might be necessary to send a nurse with her. That would be additional expense. So I was inclined to the view that, if she went, you should also go. But I was by no means sure and I discussed the matter with mummie and we decided to find out from you what you thought of it. Of course if you went this would be in addition to Madan Bhai.

If there was to be an operation it would be a good thing if you were by her. I do not particularly fancy your spending a long time in a sanatorium. They are not healthy places for anyone, more especially young and growing people. Of course if you went and mummie's health allowed, you could leave her and join temporarily a school or university in Suisse. We could consult Mlle. Hemmerlin about it. I do not call this a permanent arrangement for that will have to wait till I am available.

However, all this is in the air and it is quite possible, and even probable, that the necessity for an early visit may not arise. The latest news from mummie is good and she seems to be progressing definitely. One of the best signs is that she has put on a fair amount of weight. Since she came to Bhowali she has added 16 or 17 pounds to her weight—oddly enough I have lost just that much since I came to jail this time (in Alipore). So we are approaching each other and the difference in our weights is less by about 33 pounds. At this rate we might be level sometime in the future. I can well afford to go down.

So it is probable that mummie need not have to go to Europe this summer. That ultimately she will have to go I have little doubt. It may be in autumn or at the latest next spring. It is as well, however, to keep ready for all emergencies and I am therefore writing to you to prepare your mind and to find out from you how you feel about it.



I should also like you to keep in touch with Mlle. Hemmerlin. She will be of great use to us if you go.

I have mentioned to you that Madan Bhai might accompany mummie, but so far I have not mentioned this to others as I dislike publicity being given to our plans. Probably in another three or four weeks we shall be in a position to know definitely how matters stand. There is one difficulty. If mummie goes she ought to go before the monsoon sets in, that is, at the latest by the second half of May. This is a busy time and it may be very difficult to get passages.

I do not want this possibility of your going to upset your present life and programme. Carry on in the usual way till something more definite is decided. In the ordinary course, I suppose, you will come to Bhowali early in May. I am looking forward to that visit. The two new cottages have been taken. They are not so well situated as the other ones but they are more comfortable and better furnished. I expect that *chhoti puphi* will turn up there early in April and Dolamma soon after.

The second volume of *Glimpses* seems to be a mighty long time in appearing. It has been on the verge, so I have been told, for the last two months.

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

March 24, Sunday

Tasadduq Sherwani dead. He died day before yesterday in New Delhi. Painful and upsetting news. A quarter of a century ago I first met him at Cambridge. Last time I saw him, for a short while, was in Lucknow in September 1933 soon after my discharge from gaol. And before that we parted company in Naini prison towards the end of January 1932 when he was being transferred to Gonda or some other prison. We had been arrested together on Dec. 26, 1931, and had spent a month together in barrack No. 6. That month and the preceding months during the strenuous truce period we had had a great deal to do with each other and my liking for him had progressively grown. When he went to Europe with Ansari in the summer of 1932 for treatment he wrote to me to prison almost an apologetic letter for leaving the country at that juncture. A brave, true man, rather limited in outlook as all of us are, but not to be frightened or bullied.

Kalakankar,<sup>101</sup> Gidwani<sup>102</sup> and now Tasadduq—all gone within a few months! Youngish men. The old guard holds on. It could be better spared. I feel lonely.

March 31, Sunday

Tomorrow I go again to Bhowali. Not very satisfactory news of Kamala and definitely bad news of mother who is at Allahabad and seems to have had some kind of an attack. Perhaps the question of K going to Europe this summer will be discussed and partly decided this time. Madan is expected to be in Bhowali.

I have been reading through Bernard Shaw's *Collected Prefaces*. How well they read even after the lapse of thirty years or so and how stimulating they are! The old man is nearly 80 now and the idea that he will not be long in this world is not a pleasant one.

There are going to be many changes in this gaol. The jailer is being transferred, so also the doctor, and a new superintendent is coming. The doctor—Jivanand Pant—has been very decent to me. He was at Dehra Dun also last summer. He has visited me daily and a little talk with him has been diverting, though sometimes irritating. The jailer—Ganga Prasad, is a religious type of person with all the limitations of this type but with one marked good point. He is considerate to the prisoners and as far as I know, straight and not corrupt as nearly all jail officials are. Indeed this gaol has been the quietest and most peaceful one I have so far come across. I have hardly heard any complaints from prisoners about beating or other maltreatment. Food usually tolerable. Not only the jailer but his assistants seem to be decent. The prisoners are sorry and a little apprehensive at the coming changes. They are loud in praise of this jailer.

4th April 1935

नौरोज़<sup>103</sup>

101. The raja of Kalakankar died on 20 September 1934.

102. Acharya Gidwani died on 14 January 1935.

103. Nauroz.



April 4, 1935<sup>104</sup>

Darling Indu,

I have got your letter and I was happy to read it. *Puphi* also sent a description of the *Vasanta Utsava* and of the visit to Calcutta to see Uday Shankar.<sup>105</sup> As you are by way of becoming an expert in matters relating to art and dancing I must bow down to your opinion about Uday Shankar. Besides I have not seen Gopi Nath<sup>106</sup> dance. I liked Uday Shankar not so much because of his individual dancing as for the whole ensemble which was very pleasing.

So in about a month or so you will be leaving Santiniketan for the vacation and a little later I shall see you. Or if the water famine persists you may depart earlier. I have something in common with you there; for here also, in Almora, there is a great scarcity of water at present and I am troubled because of it as my seedlings and flower trees want plenty of water. I have to conserve the little water we get and pour it out gently on my thirsty little ones.

Gurudev's birthday is on the 7th May, you say. At one time I was under the mistaken impression, due to a misprint in a book, that it was on the 4th May. This struck me as a curious coincidence for that was the exact day and month and year (1861) when Dadu was born. But now it appears that Gurudev was born three days after Dadu.

I am inclined to agree with the U.P. boys at Santiniketan about the Hindi translation of the *Glimpses*. There are some obvious howlers in it. I noticed सफेद चींटी<sup>107</sup> myself and some others. I do not know what to do in the matter, especially from jail. I hesitate to interfere as I am no scholar of Hindi. The only thing that can be done is to draw Tewari's attention to some of the obvious mistakes. Most of these, I think, creep in because of a certain journalistic touch that Tewari has got. He does his work rapidly and sometimes carelessly. Very few writers in Hindi, as far as I can make out, pay real attention to the artistry of language, the beauty and significance of words and the images they convey. They get lost in high-sounding and vague language; there is little precision about it, and hence there is always a want of sincerity in the written word. They have not realised yet that

104. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

105. (b. 1909); won an international reputation between the wars for his Indian dances; partnered Pavlova; has created a number of dance-dramas and two shadow plays, *Ram Leela* and *Lord Buddha*; Padma Vibhushan, 1971.

106. (b. 1908); Kathakali dancer.

107. Literal translation of white ant. Should have been *deemak*.



true style comes from simplicity and sincerity. Nearly two years ago I pointed out to a small private gathering of Hindi writers in Benares that modern Hindi literature suffered from a दरबारी [*darbari*] style and as long as this continued it could not have real beauty or a mass appeal. My remarks were given publicity in the Hindi press and created quite an uproar. I was cursed and denounced for being an impertinent ignoramus. Nevertheless I hold to that opinion. All languages have passed through that stage and till they have shed it, they have not grown. Another great drawback in modern Hindi is the ignorance of most of its writers of world literature and new ideas. There must be something worthwhile at the back of what one writes. One must have knowledge and ideas. Just a mere spinning of words gracefully does not take one far.

You ask me about your reading Hindi literature. Why, of course you should do so. Hindi poetry is very beautiful but I find it a little monotonous and it seems to deal with a few limited topics. Old Hindi literature is good and it is not only desirable but necessary that we should know it. Only then can we build on it and develop it and make it absorb modern ideas. My own limited knowledge of that literature has been a great drawback to me and I hope you will not suffer thus. I could have improved that knowledge in prison—perhaps I shall still do so—if my mind was not full of the modern world with its problems. I want books dealing with these problems, with new ideas, with history, science, sociology and economics. And Hindi hardly has any decent books on these subjects. At most it has a few second-rate translations. But I am glad to find that new and interesting books are coming out.

As for novels and plays and the like modern Hindi is quite extraordinarily backward. I have made a great effort to read some of these novels and plays and almost invariably I have found them to be quite amazingly bad. Compare them to Tolstoy! The one Hindi writer who seemed to me hopeful as a novelist is Prem Chand<sup>108</sup> (he translated the *Letters from a Father to his Daughter* and a good translation it was). But then I know so little of Hindi literature that I have no business to make generalisations. Lately I have often read Hindi magazines. I find them a poor lot.

To revert to the *Glimpses*. So far as I know no one has undertaken the Tamil translation and I have no objection to your Madras professor undertaking it. Being a professor I suppose he is good enough for the job. I think the professor had better write to *puphi* about it to fix it

108. Premchand, pseudonym of Dhanpatray (1880-1936); well-known Hindi writer; his works include, *Gaban*, *Godan* and *Seva Sadan*.



up finally. Usually the arrangement for the publication of a translation is made with a publisher and not with a translator direct. I suppose your professor has some publisher in view. There is no point in translating a book and then holding it up for want of a publisher.

I notice that you did not like the Soviet plays. None of them was great but I thought some fairly good in the modern style. But the main purpose of reading them was to understand the present atmosphere of Russia.

I am glad you like Hardy, though (may I whisper it to you?) I have hardly read him. My neglect of him is strange for I am tolerably well read in that class of books. I think you will also like Meredith, one of my favourites. He is a little heavy, but if one overcomes this initial difficulty, he is altogether delightful. You will find all his books in Anand Bhawan. *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* is a good book to begin with. When one reads these books how strange their world seems when compared to today! They were not so strange in my boyhood but the last twenty years or more have made all the difference. And the changes continue at an amazing pace and the differences grow, and when you attain the advanced age in which your father does not rejoice in at present, no doubt you will look back on a changed world.

You have been now nearly a full year at Santiniketan and I am very glad you went there. You have had, on the whole, a happy time there and have grown physically and mentally. Perhaps you are gradually finding your bent. It was my wish that you should spend two years there and then go to Europe. But I am beginning to doubt if that will be possible. I can quite understand that you are not keen on leaving Santiniketan in the near future. Nor am I. It would be a pity for you to interrupt or put a stop to some of your activities there. But there is that possibility of your having to go off soon with mummie and that possibility grows. Nothing has so far been decided and I am in a hopelessly vague state of mind—a condition I dislike intensely. But the fault is hardly mine as the doctors have a major say in the matter. Perhaps we shall know more in a fortnight and certainly we ought to know definitely within a month.

It seems to me practically certain that mummie will have to go—the only question is whether she is to go just before the monsoon or just after it is over. That is to say is she to go in May or September. May is very near, dreadfully near, and I am by no means sure that we can even get passages then. But if mummie's treatment demands it, it is clear that go she must. And I feel clearly now that you should accompany her. You will be of the greatest help to her during the voyage



and it is obviously desirable that you should be near her if operations have to be performed. As I wrote to you last time, I would not like you to stay long in a sanatorium. But that is a matter that can be attended to later. Meanwhile there is just the possibility of your being asked to pack up your tooth-brush and march off!

I shall feel rather lonely here with both mummie and you far away and inaccessible. But that cannot be helped and I shall at least look forward to mummie at last recovering her health. And perhaps, if all goes well, I may fly over to you next year! Indeed I would have suggested that mummie and you might go by air also but the doctors will not permit this.

But all this is about a problematical future. At present the question is: to go or not to go, and I await impatiently for the doctors' final advice in the matter. In the meantime I am making a few preliminary arrangements, like the taking of passports etc. It is possible that you may have to sign some papers in this connection. It is as well to be prepared for contingencies.

You have asked me about your old books in Anand Bhawan. I do not know if you have thought of any special use for them. If not, why not leave them where they are? They are doing no harm. Some of the utterly useless ones may be weeded out. I have a sentimental attachment to old books which I have liked sometime or other and I suppose you have some such feeling also. They bring back old memories and visions of times gone by. But much as I love old books I prefer that they be used to their not being used, and if you want to give any of your books to some place or someone who will put them to use, why, go ahead and give them.

Dolamma has not been well. If she recovers sufficiently she may come up to Bhowali with *puphi* about the middle of April. *Chhoti puphi* and Raja Bhai are also coming up soon after. And probably the whole Pandit *khandan* will follow in May when the school closes. Perhaps you know that Ranjit *pupha* has bought some property high up above Almora right away from civilization. By the time you come back from Santiniketan there may not be any of the family in Allahabad and the sooner you come up to Bhowali the better.

I continue to amuse myself with my gardening operations. I am waiting impatiently for the seedlings to grow. It is very fascinating to watch the little shoot come out of the soil. One notices at first just a slight protruberance in the soil; something is obviously pushing it up from below. And then the tiny upstart breaks through and peeps out bravely at the strange wide world. It grows rapidly and is soon



waving gracefully in the breeze. Some of the shoots resemble little swords or daggers cleaving through the earth. I don't think I had ever before quite realized this mystery of plant growth. And two other mysteries that prison has made me appreciate are: the sudden breaking out of leaves all over a banyan tree in spring, and the equally sudden blossoming of trees.

I wrote to you a fortnight ago of the peach and plum blossoms. Already they are disappearing. Even the red rhododendrons are not aggressively noticeable now. The tender pink leaves have turned green and the look of childhood and early youth is giving place to one of maturity. In the Bhowali sanatorium there are some perfectly marvellous wistaria creepers. I had often read about these creepers but I had no clear idea what they were. Now I know and I am not likely to forget.

I have a number of iris plants in my yard here and I am greatly looking forward to their flowering for I like the iris flower. And then there is canna, that old native of India, a favourite even in the villages. Some of the so-called English flowers grow wild round about here. Do you remember the creeper—morning glory—which put up a brave show at 6, Cawnpore Road? It seems to be all over the place here, appearing even where it is not wanted.

There are very beautiful flowers all over the plains, probably not unlike the Birbhum varieties you mention, but unfortunately they have a short life because of the heat, unless special care is taken. Here in the hills flowers survive and are longer-lived.

Today is *Naoroz* and the new *Samvat* 1922 begins. And so a happy new year to you. I have celebrated it by putting on a new *kurta* which has been exceedingly uncomfortable as the stuff was almost unbleached and unwashed khadi and it irritated the skin. I hope you had better luck. The Bengali new year will come ten days later and then you will have your great gathering of Hindi highbrows. I suppose you are an ornament of the Santiniketan Hindi Samaj.

Do you know if the Bengali translation of *Glimpses* is getting on? Chanda was supposed to be doing it. The second volume of *Glimpses* is not out yet. It has taken a mighty long time. But the first volume has resulted in the press conferring the wholly undeserved title of 'historian' on me. I claim no such distinction and I warned you of this in my letters. But such verbal honours come easily when one is supposed to have gained a measure of distinction in public affairs. It is so easy (and often so disastrous) for the politician to claim and receive distinction in a variety of fields!



Did I tell you that Manishy Dey,<sup>109</sup> who is I believe Rani Chanda's<sup>110</sup> brother, presented a vast number of his sketches to mummie, in Bhowali? Some of these are good and I like them. I liked Manishy. Like all artists he is most unbusiness-like and emotional and he parted with two months hard work although he is usually very hard up.

Love from

Your loving  
Papu

*April 5, Friday*

I went to Bhowali on Monday and returned the next day. Madan was there and I had a heart to heart talk with him about personal matters. Some relief to talk to anyone.

The question of Kamala's going to Europe still undecided. Kacker gets a little irritated if it is raised and yet this uncertainty is annoying. On my return here I decided to write to him fully and my letter went off today.<sup>111</sup>

Kripalani & Feroze were also at Bhowali.

One of the prisoners attending on me—Ami Chand—had not heard from his family for 18 months. Once, many months ago, he asked the jail officials to send a letter to them but no answer came. Very probably the letter was not sent at all. It appears that for a long time past prisoners' letters have not been sent by the jail office. They have simply sat upon them, though why they should do so passes my comprehension.

At Ami Chand's request I sent word to his family through Upadhyaya<sup>112</sup> during one of my visits to Bhowali. An answer duly came full of joy at the news of a dear one of whom they had heard nothing for a year and a half. I communicated this answer to Ami Chand and he was overjoyed. A little human touch made a world of difference to him and he told me that he could not measure his happiness.

The new superintendent has come—Dr. Pande.<sup>112</sup>

109. Brother of Mukul Dey; studied painting under Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose.
110. (b. 1912); wife of Anil Kumar Chanda; educated at Dacca and Santiniketan.
111. This letter, which dealt with the further treatment of Kamala Nehru and plans for treatment in Europe, is not printed.
112. Bala Dat Pande—assistant civil surgeon.



*April 10, Wednesday*

Rarely, rarely, comest thou,  
 Spirit of Delight!  
 Wherefore hast thou left me now  
 Many a day and night?  
 Many a weary night and day  
 'Tis since thou art fled away.  
 How can ever one like me  
 Win thee back again?

*12th April 1935*

मदन अटल से मुलाकात — कमला के यूरोप जाने के मसले पर बातें। करीब करीब तय हो गया। <sup>113</sup>

*April 12, Friday*

Suddenly Madan Atal turned up this morning. I was vastly surprised. Why should he take the trouble to come all the way to Almora? If he wanted to see me could he not do so at Bhowali on the 15th? There must be something urgent. I wondered what this could be? Had he been approached by some govt. official and asked to see me about Kamala's proposed departure for Europe? Perhaps there was some suggestion about my accompanying her—Some ridiculous conditions attached which I would not agree to. So I wondered. And then he came.

It was all about the passages. Jal had got into a muddle about them and Madan wanted to fix matters up definitely with me. Good of him to take all this trouble to come. What a decent chap he is. Kamala had wired to him on receipt of Jal's letter. She is evidently greatly excited at the prospect of going.

Anyway it is practically settled that she goes now on May 23rd subject to passages being available. All day today I have been writing long notes for Madan, Indu etc. about arrangements in India and in Europe, giving detailed directions. Most of the directions were perhaps needless but I had to employ my superfluous energy. Soon I shall have to bottle this up completely when Kamala goes and my fortnightly outings stop with it. Only two more visits to Bhowali—on the 15th April and on May 1st. And then the unbroken solitude of Almora jail!

113. Interview with Madan Atal. Discussion about Kamala's departure to Europe—almost decided.

It is the 12th today. No summons yet from Kacker for the 15th. He is evidently rather bored with me.

I feel tired and weary. Life is dull and is there much point in it? Soon I shall complete six months here in this gaol, and 14 months of this sentence. Ten more months.

*April 13, Saturday—Jallianwala Bagh Day!*

Last night, weary and feverish, I went to bed and after a long wait fell asleep. I seem to have had nightmares. There was much shouting and groaning and the noise grew. I woke up, troubled and thirsty and exhausted, to find that the shouting and groaning had been done by me.

*13th April 1935*

कमला का खत मिला—भवाली से।

यह किताब खतम—एक साल और पूरा—अलीपुर जेल—देहरा जेल—आनन्द भवन—नैनी जेल—अलमोड़ा जेल—और बीच बीच में भवाली! अजीब जिन्दगी है! दस महीने और सजा के पूरा करने को है। इन दस महीनों में क्या क्या होगा और मेरा क्या हशर होगा? और उसके बाद? अंधेरा दिखता है...<sup>114</sup>

*16 April 1935<sup>115</sup>*

TO RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Dear Gurudev,

It has been decided that my wife must proceed to Europe for further treatment which might involve operations. She will probably sail in the third or fourth week of May. As I am incapacitated from accompanying her, it has become all the more necessary that Indira should go with her. I have informed Indira of this.

This new development distresses me in many ways but I see no way to avoid it. I do not know how matters will shape in the future and what Indira will do. Meanwhile, she has to cut short her career at Santiniketan and I am exceedingly sorry that she should have to do so. I have seen very little of her during her year at Santiniketan—the last time I had a brief glimpse of her at a gaol interview was nearly six

114. Received Kamala's letter—from Bhowali.

Finished this book—one more year over—Alipur jail—Dehra jail—Anand Bhawan—Naini jail—Almora jail—and in between Bhowali! Life is strange! Ten months yet to finish sentence—what will happen in these ten months, and what will happen to me? And after that? I see darkness.

115. Nehru File, Visvabharati, Santiniketan.



months ago. But even these brief glimpses, as well as the reports I have had from friends, have convinced me how well she was getting on there. Her own testimony, and that is important enough, is clear and she has been very happy at Santiniketan and has no desire whatever to leave it. I was looking forward to her remaining there for a longer period and growing in mind and body under your sheltering care and guidance. It was a great consolation to me in prison that my daughter was surrounded by loving and capable friends who were gently helping in her development in the right direction, and I felt infinitely grateful to all of them for the love and kindness they showered on her. I rejoiced that I had been fortunate enough to choose Santiniketan for her education at this stage of her life.

My plans and expectations in this matter, as well as in many others, have been cut short and twisted by untoward circumstances and I must perforce bow to them. But you will permit me, I hope, to express my deep gratitude to you and to other friends at Santiniketan, and to wish your great institution all the success it so richly deserves.

I write these few lines from the sanatorium at Bhowali where I have been brought for a day to visit my wife. From here I go back to my present habitation, the Almora jail.

With affectionate regards,

Yours,  
Jawaharlal

*April 17, Wednesday*

I have been to Bhowali and back, returning yesterday. A cheering visit. Met mother, Nan, Betty & the babe. Kamala looking much the same but seemed more cheerful than before. Full of the idea of going abroad. Plans of going discussed—letters and telegrams sent. Kamala is to sail on the Italian Lloyd Triestino on May 23rd. Accommodation reserved but it is not at all good. This is troubling me as it will mean a painful voyage. I am hoping that a transfer to a better cabin will be made later. Another matter that worries—will K be strong enough to walk a little—to the ship, from cabin to deck? So far she cannot walk at all. It will be bad if she has to be carried about.

Wrote to Rabindranath Tagore about Indu's leaving Santiniketan.

How old and worn-out mother looked!

Various activities—making plans, arrangements, meeting family people after nearly 6 months—filled the day and kept me a bit exhilarated. A change from the jail routine. I returned in a fairly contented frame

of mind. Only one or perhaps two more visits to Bhowali and then K goes off and Indu—And then? When will I see them again?

Saw Jamnalalji also at Bhowali.

What a horrible tragedy at Firozabad.<sup>116</sup> Eleven persons, a doctor and his ten patients, burnt to death in a house by an infuriated Muslim mob. What a disgusting, savage people we are. Politics, progress, socialism, communism, science—where are they before this black religious savagery?

*April 18, Thursday*

A huge black centipede appeared today. He was trying to carry off a black beetle which he had seized. I had the two separated when a myna came and picked up the centipede and swallowed him with relish!

*April 20, Saturday*

Interview with Nan & Ranjit. How haggard Ranjit looked? He is evidently seriously ill. For a person like him to be told not to ride, run, take exercises, drive a car, go up in an aeroplane or indeed to do anything that a physically active man does is a tragedy.

The account of the Khali property which he has almost purchased reminded us repeatedly of father. How it would have suited him!

Wrote to Kamala.

*April 30, Tuesday*

I have had a thin week. Felt weary and stale and rather disgusted with everything. With this background small matters have tended to upset me. The report of the proceedings of the A.I.C.C. meeting<sup>117</sup> was disagreeable reading—not so much what was done—nothing much could be done—as the spirit behind it. It was a spirit of terrible caution and of

116. On 14 April 1935, in a communal riot 42 persons were injured and a house set on fire.

117. The Working Committee resolution only drew "the attention of the country to the continuance of the ban on Congress organisations in the N.W.F.P. and Bengal and on affiliated and allied bodies...like the Khudai Khidmatgars and Hindustani Seva Dal...and the recent suppression of labour and youth league organisations...on the plea of alleged tendencies without reference to any overt acts".



repression of open discussion on topics which were considered by the ruling authorities as dangerous. An easy way to get out of this—rule it out of order. It is quite amazing how almost anything under the new constitution can be ruled out of order as dealing with new topics. Rajendra Babu has disappointed me greatly. But what can he do with his Working Committee? Rajagopalachari is probably the ablest of the lot and he has gone terribly to the right. Sarojini, Nariman etc., were always of the cautious right except when Sarojini's poetical fervour made her say fine nothings. It is curious how Rajagopalachari, one-time leader of the no-changers, has swung completely round. And yet perhaps that was natural. He moves in a terribly narrow circle. Even Bapu—he is either a noncooperator or a full-blooded cooperator. The fire or a sofa—though a sofa is hardly the correct place for him. He can think only in extremes—either extreme eroticism or asceticism. Was it not Aldous Huxley who said that the ascetic was the counterpart of Don Juan?<sup>118</sup>

The A.I.C.C. had nothing to say about the suppression of civil liberties and of the ban on numerous labour bodies. Only the Khudai Khidmatgars and the H.S. Dal mentioned. Anything savouring of labour frightens it—might it not lead to an approval of that terrible thing, communism?

Meanwhile Vallabhbhai, that great peasant leader, has presided over a provincial peasants conference at Allahabad, under the august auspices of Purushottamdas Tandon, and no doubt he preached love and goodwill towards those pillars of society, the landlords.<sup>119</sup> What does Tandon stand for? I don't suppose he knows himself. Singular how an intelligent person like him can be so lost in cloudland and so timid in thought. Or perhaps it is the vague mystical influence of the *satsang*. It is extraordinarily difficult for me to imagine any really spiritual or intellectual person belonging to this order of retired petty government servants and the like. Is religion itself in its ordinary connotations really spiritual? I imagine not. Bapu is highly religious but hardly spiritual in my sense of the word. Religion is really more materialistic than science.

118. "The professional Don Juan destroys his spirit as fatally as does the professional ascetic, whose looking-glass image he is". Essay on *One and Many in Do What You Will*.

119. As president of the U.P. Provincial Kisan. Conference on 27 and 28 April 1935, Vallabhbhai Patel cautioned the peasants not to "dispossess any one of his rights" (i.e. the zamindars), but to concentrate on protecting "their own rights".



The A.I.C.C. was even afraid of protesting against the bans against the Congress in the Indian states. This was considered interference in their internal affairs!

A small matter which upset me yesterday was the beating of a prisoner by a warder. This took place in my yard though not, fortunately, in my presence. I would have flared up if I had been there. As it was I was greatly troubled and decided to report the matter to the supt. who was to have come to me that day, it being parade day. But he did not come. Later I told the acting jailer. Probably he remonstrated mildly with the warder. Curiously the warder in question has always struck me as rather a decent person. If the matter had gone up to the supt. he would have had to take formal notice and probably fined the warder. Would I then have felt sad about this?

Water is very scarce nowadays and my little garden is suffering greatly. The heat is increasing and my seedlings shrivel up. I have developed a great interest in them, almost amounting to affection and I watch their troubles with anxiety. I have never before felt quite so close to them. The little things seem to have an individuality. The other day in transplanting a little canna shoot I broke off the head rather clumsily. I was hurt by this and for some days the idea pained me although there is no lack of cannas here. My sunflowers have developed a strange disease which has killed off a few. Fortunately it has been checked. The dahlias and gladioli and irises and amaryllis are doing well. But the little zinnias are in a bad way. The amaranthus has expired in the womb.

How much of my thoughts these little flowers and seedlings occupy! I find myself thinking of them at night and what I should do to help them and improve them. If an idea strikes me I look forward to the next day and grow almost impatient in order to give effect to it. I spend hours in pottering about my yard. I find that I think more of my little garden than of political and other problems! Perhaps it is as well and it is certainly more soothing.

At the back of my mind always is the thought of Kamala's departure for Europe. This draws near and although I am glad, vague fears fill me. When will I see her again? And what of Indu? She is in Bhowali now and tomorrow I go there. I shall see her after nearly six months.

I have got to live in a tent for some weeks. My barrack roof is going to be repaired. The tent was put up in my yard today and I found it better than I had expected. I had looked forward to a *choldari* but it was a double-fly Swiss cottage or something like it, about 8 ft. x 9 ft. The prospect of living in the tent is quite exciting. It will be a change after full six months of this barn in which I am locked up



every evening. For I have now been in Almora over six months. What a long time it has been!

When I went back to prison in Naini last August I told Kamala that I would be back in a hundred days. I calculated that I would be out after the Bombay Congress and the Assembly elections. My calculations were all wrong. I have already been 253 days in prison since then, and another 291 days remain before my term ends naturally. Perhaps I may not have to go to the very end of this period. I put it therefore approximately at another 250 days.

But again there is a vague rumour that I might be let out to go with Kamala. Probably there is absolutely nothing in it, only hints thrown out by newspaper men. And yet even a rumour of this kind, which I do not believe in, excites me a little and automatically I begin to plan. I want to be out of this damned hole but still I had rather not be beholden to govt. for their grace. If I have survived nearly 15 months of this sentence I might as well carry on to the end of the 24th. Only there is Kamala and her condition—and Indu.

I feel in better mood this evening. Perhaps because of tomorrow's visit to Bhowali, perhaps because of the tent!

Tomorrow is May Day—a poor anniversary for labour all over the world, except in the Soviet lands. And even Soviet Russia seems to be going backward and adapting itself to the imperialist world. A toast to King George in Moscow!

Well, well, anyway I shall celebrate this day in the Bhowali sanatorium and see Kamala and Indu and mother and Betty.

2.5.35<sup>120</sup>

TO DR. SAH

Dear Dr. Prem Lal Sah,<sup>121</sup>

You have been not only a doctor but such a good friend to us during the last seven months at Bhowali that I must express my real gratitude to you for all you have done for us. My wife is now leaving Bhowali for Europe and one chapter of our connection with Bhowali will soon close. The connection will however continue in other ways. Meanwhile I wish to tell you how grateful I am to you.

120. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

121. A physician at Bhowali.

I shall be glad if you will kindly let me know what I owe you on account of your fees. Please do not hesitate to charge me your fees on the ground that I am a politician who has gained some public approval.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

May 6, 1935<sup>122</sup>

Darling Indu,

As I write this letter to you on the evening of May 6th you must be speeding to Allahabad. Probably you will not have returned to Bhowali by the time this reaches there. But that does not matter. You will get the letter a day or two later on your return. I feel like writing to you this evening and the thought strikes me that in all likelihood this will be my last letter to you before you sail with mummie. When I write again probably you will be on the high seas and my letter will be addressed to some place in Switzerland. How far you will be from me then, moving away rapidly across the Arabian Sea, even further away from this little corner of the world which I inhabit at present! And I wonder when and where I shall see you again. We create these distances in our minds, physically they are not really great. The world grows narrower daily and you in Switzerland will only be four or five days flight from Allahabad. And as for meeting you, we have not seen too much of each other during these years, have we? We met at Bhowali last week after nearly six months. And yet old habit and our early ideas persist and Switzerland does seem a long way off and your going there makes you much more inaccessible. Perhaps all this is for the good, good for you and good for me. You will have to shift for yourself a little more and not rely on me or on others. Home is good but it has a tendency to narrow one and make one too much of a hot-house growth. It does not prepare one sufficiently for wider contacts and interests and when one goes out into the bigger world, it is apt to hurt. Other people do not take so much interest in us and we are apt to resent this. That of course is an unreasonable attitude and the fault lies not in others but in our own narrowness and selfishness, the product of a constricted home life. The sooner we get used to cooperation with others the better fitted we are for the ways of the world. It takes all sorts to make this world and it is folly to expect others to be after our fashion.

122. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.





TALKING TO STUDENTS AT SANTINIKETAN, JANUARY 1934



या भारी व्यापारकी, उन्नति कहाँ समाय ।

३० चैत्र (मीन)

१९९१

चैत्र सुदी १०

१०-१२-९१

शनि

१३ अप्रैल

मनल। का खत लिखी। मवाली से

यह कि तान खतम - एक साल और  
पूरा - अलीगढ़ जेल - देहा जेल -  
आनन्द मजरा - नैनी जेल - अलमोड़ा  
जेल और बीच बीच में मवाली !  
अजीब जितनी है ! दस नहीं न  
और सजा के पूरा कालों को है - इन  
दस नहीं जो मैं क्या क्या हो गा और  
मेरा क्या दशा हो गा ? और उसके  
बाद ? अंधेरा दिखता है ...



This letter is taking the shape of a farewell epistle but fortunately I shall see you once again to bid you farewell. But many thoughts come to my mind and it soothes me to put some of them down in black and white. I shall of course write to you more or less regularly to Switzerland within the limits of jail rules and regulations. These are not very liberal as you know and a curious difficulty arises. If I send mummie and you my usual fortnightly letter, as I propose to do, and receive letters from you, I shall be cut off from people in India. Except for possible interviews, I shall not be in touch with them. Even interviews are not easy to arrange in Almora jail. Thus in July when Dolamma and the *puphis* leave Bhowali for Allahabad these interviews will stop and I do not quite see how I am to have even news of them after that. As for Dolamma she is too weak even to come from Bhowali to Almora for an interview. However, I suppose we shall manage to fix up something when the time comes. We need not worry about it now. So far as you and mummie are concerned I shall write to you by air mail every fortnight and I expect you to do likewise. Mummie is not strong enough to write much for some time at least. So I am afraid the burden of writing will fall on you.

I want you to leave India in a happy and expectant frame of mind. Do not worry at all about me. I am all right. I can manage to find a fair measure of peace of mind wherever I might be. The mind cannot be enchained and I have developed the habit of undertaking great journeys mentally. I am quite sure that I am happier and freer here than great numbers of people who are not physically restricted. My peace of mind would be almost complete if I was assured that mummie and you were faring well in Europe.

Parents are a curious phenomena. They seem to live their lives again in their children. I have many wider interests in life which sometimes envelop me and make me forget much else, but still I am not free from that preoccupation of parenthood and I am vastly interested in your growth and preparation for life. The fact that I cannot help you much personally does not lessen this preoccupation. Parents, again, have a tendency to mould their children after their own fashion and to impress them with their own ideas. To some extent I suppose this is inevitable, and yet the fact is that each individual stands out by himself or herself as a new experiment which life is working out. To force a growing person into a particular mould is to stultify him or her and to prevent growth. Bernard Shaw has called this the greatest of crimes. And so I have tried, with what success I cannot say, not to force my ideas and pattern of life on you. I want you to grow and develop after your own fashion and only so can you fulfil your life



purpose. Inevitably you will carry through life certain hereditary habits and ideas which your home life has impressed upon you in your early days, and I am conceited enough to think that your hereditary background is rather good. But the foreground must be your own creation. I have often asked you what particular subjects of study interest you. The object of my questions was not so much to determine these subjects as to find out how your mind was working. It matters little what subjects you specialise in, provided they are such as interest you. What I am far more interested in, is yourself. All round us we see people who have had brilliant academical careers and yet who are somehow unable to fit in anywhere. Partly the fault is theirs, but certainly there is something seriously lacking in such a one-sided education.

Right education must be an all-round development of the human being, a harmonising of our internal conflicts and a capacity to cooperate with others. We are the mirror through which we see others and generally we shall find in others what we look for and expect. If we keep this mirror of our minds and hearts bright and clean, the world and other men and women will have a pleasant aspect to us and we shall be agreeable companions and comrades to them. But if we cloud our mirror and make it murky and smoky how shall we see straight? We shall then become self-centred and selfish, oblivious of our own failings and always finding fault with others. And the others will come to the conclusion that we are highly disagreeable persons and pass us by.

I am afraid I am writing like a professor. Forgive me this while. I do not want to preach or profess but I do want to take you into my confidence. As I grow older and perhaps wiser I attach more and more importance to real education, and by that, you know, I do not mean examinations and the like. I think a proper intellectual training is essential to do any job efficiently. But far more important is the background of this training—the habits, ideals, ideas, objectives, the internal harmony, the capacity for cooperation, the strength to be true to what one considers to be right, the absence of fear. If one attains this internal freedom and fearlessness it is difficult for the world, harsh as it is, to suppress one. One may not be happy in the narrow sense of the word for those who are sensitive can seldom be crudely happy, but the loss is not great for something that is worthwhile takes its place, a sense of inner fulfilment.

For you these questions and problems are yet of the future. Do not trouble about them. It is a little foolish of me to write of them even and thus perhaps to burden your mind when it should be as free of burdens as possible. At your time of life you should grow in happiness for otherwise your youth would be darkened with care and worry.



I want you to be happy in your youth for so I renew my own youth and participate in your joy. I do not want you to be a quarrelsome and disgruntled specimen of humanity!

You cannot help carrying the burden of your family with you, not so much in Europe but very much so in India. As it happens, your family has attained a great deal of prominence in the Indian world and this has its advantages and disadvantages for you. I am proud of my father and the example of his life has often inspired me and strengthened me. Trying to judge him not as his son but independently of it, I believe he was a really great man. If your grandfather's example strengthens and inspires you in any way that is your good fortune. If your feelings towards your father or mother also help you in that way, well and good. But your grandfather and father and mother, whatever their virtues may be, have many failings also like all human beings. The public mind, however, especially in India, has a habit of idealizing and dehumanizing the persons it likes and this is apt to irritate, in particular those who are supposed to live up to these imaginary standards. The family and one's forebears thus become a nuisance and a burden. I do not want you to feel this way about us! Do not imagine that the family or family tradition wants you to do this or that or to refrain from doing something else.

You should go the way you think proper and right and if the thought of family tradition helps you in this, well stick to it. Not otherwise. To some extent you cannot get rid of the family tradition for it will pursue you and, whether you want to or not, it will give you a certain public position which you may have done nothing to deserve. That is unfortunate but you will have to put up with it. After all it is not a bad thing to have a good family tradition. It helps us to keep looking up, it reminds us that we have to keep a torch burning and that we cannot cheapen ourselves or vulgarise ourselves.

There is a terrible lot of vulgarity in the world and we see it everywhere in India. And when I talk of vulgarity I do not refer to the poor; they are singularly free from it for they do not try to pose and appear to be something other than they are. It is our middle class that is often vulgar. It has no artistic standards and it has got rather lost between Eastern and Western culture. It is hardly to blame for it for circumstances have forced this unhappy state of affairs on it. Political circumstances have largely made us what we are and then there is our narrow domestic life. And so when we go out into the world we are often making false gestures which jar on the sensitive. I confess that I find this very painful.



But enough of this professorial theorising! My pen runs away with me. I have little to say about your studies in Suisse. We have discussed them already and you will fix up with Mlle. Hemmerlin. If unhappily Mlle. Hemmerlin is not available then you will be at a loose end. I think you had better consult Mlle. Rolland then. As you suggested, I think you had better take, besides languages, history and economics. If you join the university at Lausanne or Geneva you will have to choose some fixed course.

I don't think you will have any difficulty about opening a bank account in Switzerland. At any rate I had none in Cambridge although I was a minor—I was under 18 then, about your age.

I do not know how you will fix up things at Allahabad. I hope you will finish with most of mummie's packing so that she may have no trouble when she goes there. I suppose you know that *puphi* and *pupha* will occupy Anand Bhawan when you leave. I am very glad we have made this arrangement for it takes a burden off my mind and the house will be well looked after. The whole house will be at their disposal and no changes need be made. So far as mummie's and my room upstairs is concerned it had better be kept for me whenever I might need it—that won't be for a long time yet. If you want to put any of your personal effects apart you can put them in our room. But I do not think it is necessary or desirable for you to shift many of your things across. They will be better off where they are and *puphi* can look after them. I do not want my room to be converted into a luggage room! As for the other rooms in Anand Bhawan they should remain as they are. *Puphi* and *pupha* can make such changes in them as they like when they come.

You will remember that I told *puphi* about the Hindi translation of the *Glimpses*. I have thought over this again and I am quite clear that the Tewari arrangement should continue. I am not very satisfied with this and some of the errors are very irritating but we cannot make a change now. This would mean my breaking my word and I think this would be improper. Besides, Tewari must have entered into arrangements and contracts with publishers and printers and obviously we cannot upset the whole apple cart at this stage. One message, however, I should like to be conveyed to Tewari. This relates to the notes that are being given at the end of each monthly part. These notes are very copious and are entirely out of keeping with the spirit of the book. Some brief notes are necessary. For instance when I refer to *Alice in Wonderland* the Hindi reader ought to be told something about it. The notes should be briefly explanatory, *not* additional. As it is they are long extracts from some encyclopaedia giving all manner of dates



and utterly unnecessary information. The whole purpose of my writing as I did was to ignore this useless information. Why then add it? It would seem that the gentleman who is thus reproducing pages of an encyclopaedia thinks that I had not done my job properly and is improving upon it. As a matter of fact he does nothing of the kind and his notes have little or no relation to the text. Please write to *puphi* about this. You can quote this paragraph from my letter....

Mummie or you need not write to me now from Bhowali as I am likely to see you on the 14th. I want you to write to me from Bombay prior to sailing and then from the ports of call....

I do hope you will be able to take with you volume 2 of the *Glimpses*. It is really amazing how long this has been in the press. I was told in January that it was almost ready—and here we are in May. Please take three copies—one for yourself, one for mummie and one for Madan Bhai. Even if the book is not quite ready, take it in an incomplete stage. But there is no reason why it should not be got ready within a few days. If this has not been fixed up already please write to *puphi* to shake up Kitabistan and the A.L.J. press. Also have a copy sent to me.

I have written more than enough and it is time I ended. My next letter will fly to you across the gardens and deserts and ruined cities of western Asia.

Give my love to Dolamma and *puphi* and the infant. I am afraid I am not enamoured of the infant's name. I did think Rahula a lordly name.

I hope you will give a good deal of time during your last days at Bhowali to Dolamma. She will not see you again for a long time. Did I give you Halide Edib's<sup>123</sup> address in Paris? It is as follows: Halide Edib Hanum, 2 rue Georges de Porto Riche, Paris (14).

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

May 7, Tuesday

I have not felt in the mood to write and yet my head has been full of ideas and worries—chiefly the latter. Why do I worry about little things? But are they little when they affect one so?

123. (1884-1964); Turkish feminist leader; played a prominent role in the Young Turk revolution, 1908-09 and in the nationalist revolution, 1919-24; her works include *The Turkish Ordeal* and *Inside India*.

I was happy to see Indu at Bhowali. She is growing up and yet is curiously and delightfully child-like. Rabindranath Tagore wrote to me, in answer to a letter from me, that he had observed her closely and he congratulated me on the admirable way I had brought her up. Which was very pleasing to read both because of Indu and myself. And yet my bringing up has been strangely distant—from gaol with infrequent interviews and letters. I have thought of her enough and tried hard enough even from a distance to help her gently and without pressure to grow up as I would like her to grow.

Yesterday I wrote to her a long letter—my last letter before she sails for Europe with Kamala. I shall see her once more before she goes for I am due at Bhowali again on the 14th. On the 15th Kamala and she leave Bhowali for Allahabad and then to Bombay and away.

I have felt very weary and tired for some days. At last I took my temperature and found it to be 99.4°F. in the evening. Since then I have found that there is a rise every evening to above 99°F.

I have moved to the tent in my yard today. From tomorrow the roof of my barrack will be taken down and replaced by another. It is far pleasanter in the tent. I cannot be locked up here and I feel free. I spent nearly two hours after sunset in walking about and watering my flowers, for water comes slowly through the tap just about then.

The jubilee celebrations are on.<sup>124</sup> Yesterday the prisoners were given some sweets, a worthy local philanthropist paying. But there is general discontent at the absence of releases and remissions. They had looked forward to some such gesture for long. Ever since I was at Naini last year I was asked by prisoners, especially long-term ones, when the *jugli* was coming and whether it would bring them remissions and discharges. Even the warders curse. Instead of some reward which they feel is their due on such occasions, they were asked to contribute to the jubilee fund!

It is just a year today to my leaving Alipore jail for Dehra Dun.

I am told that Mrs. Jafar Ali<sup>125</sup> (Savitri Devi) was to have reached this gaol today. She is being kept in the woman's barrack. Her sentence is five years(?), a terrible long time.

I have been reading Toller's plays. How moving in their intensity they are and how lovable is Toller.

124. 6 May 1935, the silver jubilee of George V's accession.

125. Alyce Nisbet Wright; an Irish woman converted to Hinduism and a prominent Congresswoman and revolutionary; sentenced in January 1932 to five years rigorous imprisonment for harbouring an absconder in Lahore Conspiracy Case.



*May 8, Wednesday*

One of the prisoners, recently sentenced for counterfeiting coins, is an extraordinarily cheerful person. He sings at his work and in the evening and he sings well. But what attracts is the care-free voice—it has a tone and a ring in it which is very unusual in prison.

Some time back there was a lunatic under observation in one of the cells. He sang and shouted and conversed with himself in a loud voice unendingly. It was amazing how he could carry on without stopping for long hours of the day and night. He was not amusing at all but somehow his voice fascinated me. I never saw him. He was sent on from here to a lunatic asylum.

As the roof of my old barrack is taken off numerous sparrows' nests appear, some with eggs, some with young ones. A few of the little ones have survived so far and we have been taxing our ingenuities in order to feed them and keep them going. It is a hard job and I am afraid we shall fail.

There has been great commotion in sparrow land. There is no less of a commotion among the human beings in the prison—prisoners and warders—since the new supt. and jailer took charge. The old order, mild and fraternal, is no more. There are continual searches, traps for the unwary, *peshis* and stiff punishments. Today a prisoner, I was told, had to undergo stand-up handcuffs, or whatever this inhuman punishment is called.

It is very peaceful in this tent under the starlit night with a pale quarter-moon in the sky. Only the jail cries and countings are nearer and they jar. And every now and then the warders come by on their rounds.

*May 11, Saturday*

I have been jotting down today some figures about my previous convictions, sentences, prisons etc. I have to rely entirely on my memory and it is surprising how weak it is in regard to these. It is evident that the sentences did not create a powerful impression on me. Still for what it may be worth I am noting down here some of the vague and uncertain facts dug out of an elusive memory.



[illegible]



52

Total of sentences amounted to	<u>10½ years</u>
Period actually served so far (Mid-May 1935)	4 years 9 months
Still to serve of present sentence - -	9 months.
Nakha Sentence suspended (still!) 2 years 6 months	
Quashed by court 3 months	} . . . 2 years 6 months
Amnesty - 7 months	
Remissions - 5 months	
Penalties released 15 months	
	<u>10 years 6 months</u>

Thus including remissions I have so far served  
 over five years. → To May 15. 1935.  
 ↳ 5 years 2 months.  
 = =

Prisons where I have been kept

approx. periods.

Lucknow District Jail	... 12 months	... 1921, 1922, 1923
Allahabad District Jail	... 10 days	... 1922
Nabha Central Jail	... 15 days	... 1923
Naini Central Prison	... 12½ months	... 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934.
Varanasi Central Prison Patna.	10 days	... 1930
Bareilly District Jail	... 4 months	... 1932
Dehra Dun District Jail	... 17½ months	... 1932, 1933, 1934.
Perdang Jail Calcutta	... 4 days	... 1934
Alipore Central Jail Calcutta	2¾ months	1934
Almora District Jail	... 6½ months	1934, 1935 (to mid May). →

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 4 years 8½ months approx.

Travelling under custody  
(railway, mines)  
Interdiction in Grand Manner  
in August 1931  
Total.

... 13 days

... 11 days

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 4 years 9¼ months approx.



May 12, Sunday

The ways of prison. My old barrack has been partly broken down. The whole roof is off—On one side a large hole has been made in the wall where a new door will be put in. The hole is big enough to allow three persons to march in abreast. But still the old barred door on the opposite side is solemnly locked up every evening! It is immaterial, so far as the gaol authorities are concerned, that the opposite wall hardly exists and people can march in and out with the greatest ease through it, although the old door is locked. Inside there is nothing but broken stones etc. But the routine must be observed!

Another instance of gaol efficiency. The estimate for my barrack repairs was made originally before I came to Almora jail. It was based naturally on measurements of the length and breadth taken with an ancient tape in the office. Even after my arrival this tape was produced and used to measure it. The estimate was high and the I.G. protested and wanted it revised. The jail people protested that on the basis of those measurements it could not be revised or lowered. They had given the lowest figure. After months of correspondence—in the course of which the P.W.D. was consulted and the district engineer visited the barrack—the I.G. sanctioned the repairs. His hands were forced by the threat that the roof might come down on me at any moment and would in no event survive the monsoon.

A huge quantity of stones were collected for this work—iron sheets for the roof were ordered. The stones had to be paid for by cubic area and the question of their measurement arose. The contractor claimed that he had brought about 2200 c.ft. of them. This seemed a lot and the jail officials haggled with him and almost tried to strike a bargain for 1600 c.ft. Ultimately the bright idea struck them that they might themselves measure the stones collected near my barrack. They brought their ancient tape and were in some difficulties with it. I came out of my barrack and offered them a small 5 ft. tape which I possessed. With the help of this and extensive calculations they came to the conclusion that the stones amounted to about 900 c.ft. only!

When I suggested that they might invest in a new tape the jailer complained of the high prices in Almora where such a tape would cost Rs. 3/8. The result of using my 5 ft. tape was a revelation to them. They examined their old tape again and found that it had been cut across and the two ends tied up but in between over 40 ft. were missing! So that all their measurements were 40 ft. or more in error. Such an obvious and enormous error had so far passed unnoticed.



Thus my barrack which was patently not more than 50 or 60 ft. long had been put down by them as over 100 ft. long and all their calculations had proceeded on this basis. No one with any eye for distance or length could make such an extraordinary error. Long ago I had myself noted down in my diary that the length inside was about 52 ft. But I had never been asked or told what their measurements were.

So that all their calculations were 40% in excess of requirements and orders for material—iron sheeting, stones etc.—have already been sent out on this basis. The error has only now been found out and the jail officials are not happy about it, though the new jailer probably feels that the fault is not his as he is a newcomer. Still there is consternation, for the I.G.—Salamatullah—is known to be a wrathful person.

One good result—a new tape has at last been bought even though it cost Rs. 3/8!

Such minor lapses may occur. But jail discipline must be enforced at all costs. Since the new jailer came there have been scores of *peshis* of prisoners and warders and punishments. There is a general atmosphere of resentment and everyone remembers, with a sigh, the good old days of the old jailer, Ganga Prasad. There is a deal of sneaking and spying and of one warder trying to get another into trouble going on.

Am I deteriorating in gaol? I must be. I am dull and lazy and I seem to feel less interest in the world and its doings. It is not unhappiness, though of course there is a good deal of it. But I have been far more unhappy at other times. It is just flatness, want of pep—Events recorded in the papers sometimes anger me and then I forget them and return to my petty jail routine. Is it age? Or jail life, or both? The keenness seems to be going from life.

Day after tomorrow I go to Bhowali for the last time to bid farewell to Kamala and Indu! And I return here to begin my sixteenth month of my present sentence.

*May 16, Thursday*

Yesterday at 3.30 in the afternoon—Kamala & Indu & Madan left the Bhowali sanatorium for Kathgodam by car. I bade goodbye to them and immediately started for Almora. I took the high road and she took the low. When will we meet again? And where? My visits to Bhowali have ended and the changeless routine of the Almora jail now confronts me. After nearly seven months of it I am used enough to it. Coming back to it there is a feeling of returning to my normal abode.



I have the flowers at least for company and they are coming out bravely to lighten the burden of my loneliness and separation.

Perhaps I might get transferred to some other jail. There are rumours that I am to be sent to Dehra Dun. "Why Dehra? I dislike the place now with its high walls and narrow enclosure. Anyway I have nine months more almost to a day before I finish my term and one jail is not very different from another.

Mother was present at the parting at Bhowali sanatorium. She was terribly affected. Poor brave old lady.

Kamala must have reached Allahabad today. It has been so hot here today and the thought of Kamala having to face the Allahabad heat after eight months of Bhowali has unnerved me. What will be her condition when she sails?...

*May 19, Sunday*

No news of Kamala except a news item in the papers that she reached Allahabad and was removed from the train in a stretcher! I am sending a telegram to Bombay where she ought to have reached this evening—to enquire.

It is cool at night and hot in the day time. The tent becomes very close and stuffy in the middle of the day. I go to bed later than usual and walk in my little garden in the moonlight. I am up earlier too, sometimes soon after four or at 4.30 a.m. I make up for the short night's rest by sleeping in the day-time—a disturbed sleep in an oppressive atmosphere. Today, during my afternoon siesta I had a curious dream. I saw father standing in front of me. This is not an unusual dream and previously I took him for granted and there was no surprise. But this time I was surprised. I remembered that he had died and wondered how he had appeared. I looked hard at him and then his features gradually changed and instead of him there was mother standing! I woke up weeping copiously.

*May 20, Monday*

I had news of Kamala's arrival in Bombay today. Still I felt disturbed and upset all day. A number of petty occurrences added to the strain and my ill-humour. Water was scarce today and my plants wilted. Some young ones are drying away. A good part of my labour on them seems to be wasted. Then in the morning a large number of goats

appeared carrying loads for the repair work going on in the old barrack. Some of the goats, in spite of precautions, swallowed some of my flowers and a particular cosmos plant in which I was taking special interest. Later someone inadvertently almost ended a young zinnia plant. A chapter of disasters!

It is hot all day and stuffy. The sun is strong. And all day there is shouting going on among the prisoners who are working as masons and labourers. They have to pass to and fro from my yard to the other parts of the jail. A locked gate intervenes and every time there are long and repeated shouts of *jamadar kholo*, before the gate is opened. Sometimes this shouting goes on for half an hour at a time. The gate is about 15 feet from my little tent so I get the full benefit of it.

So all day I was in an irritated mood. As it grew cool in the evening I cooled down also to some extent. But I feel weary and discontented. There is no looking forward to my next visit to Bhowali, no counting of days. One can hardly count them when they run into hundreds! Two hundred and seventy one days still to the end of my term.

*June 3, Monday*

For two weeks I have not written in this book. Two dull weeks, sometimes with various thoughts gnawing within me, sometimes feeling unhappy, but on the whole I have kept together and more or less peaceful. I have busied myself with my little garden, spending hours daily over it; not doing much but it was a good excuse to occupy myself. Water grows scarcer than ever and it is a daily problem how to ration my limited supply. In Almora city, I am told there is considerable suffering for want of water and petty riots occur at the public pumps where crowds gather and wait for hours. The municipality, or whoever is responsible, must be thoroughly incompetent. There is water enough 6 or 7 miles away and the least that might have been done was to get one or two lorries and cart the water.

On the whole the jail people have been good to me as regards the water and perhaps I get more than my proper share. I feel guilty of using it for plants when people suffer the lack of it. But I console myself that these people would not get it anyhow.

It has been very hot and the tent is almost unbearable in the middle of the day. I have been nearly a month in this tent and with all this heat I prefer it greatly to the barrack. The evenings are very pleasant



and I walk about till late at night under the stars. Today there was the new moon in all its beauty.

My care and constant attendance has not been wasted. The flowers appear, even though they are starved of water. Some of the sunflowers are enormous. One of them is 10½ inches across. The dahlias are also beautiful and large. Zinnias are coming out and so also canna and gladioli. If only it would rain! I scan the skies morning and evening but there is no trace of cloud. It has hardly rained at all for two months now.

I follow Kamala's journey. She must be nearing Venice now and in another two days she ought to be there. I had a cable or rather wireless from Indu from the Arabian Sea. No news since then. Also letters from her and Kamala from Bombay.

Yesterday there was an unusual sound and sight for Almora—the humming of an aeroplane. Probably someone flying to Badrinath.

Today's papers brought the news of the Quetta earthquake<sup>126</sup>—a terrible affair. With all the shock it produced, it had a soothing effect on me. Before a great calamity one's own troubles seem to become trivial and unimportant.

I have come across a sonnet on the Buddha which I like and, with the picture of the Anuradhapura<sup>127</sup> Buddha before me, I have read it every evening. Strange how Buddha appeals to me. There is a physical appeal of even the statue in the conventional pose. Buddha—Marx—Gandhi—a strange medley!

June 7, 1935<sup>128</sup>

Indu darling,

On the 28th May I received your cable, probably sent from Aden or thereabouts, and forwarded to me from Bhowali. Day before yesterday came the cable informing me of your safe arrival in Vienna. I was half expecting news that day but I thought the cable would come from Venice. That you had all already reached Vienna was a surprise. I am afraid I am getting a bit out of date and am not keeping up with new developments in world travel.

126. On 31 May 1935, there was a severe earthquake in Quetta and the surrounding areas. Thirty to forty thousand people were reported dead.

127. Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka, established in 500 B.C., was the capital of ancient Sinhalese kings. Its famous archaeological remains are the pyramidal *dagobas* or Buddhist *stupas*.

128. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

So you have arrived at the end of your sea journey and are in Vienna now. You will stick to the land now and may not have to cross the ocean again for a long time. I have followed the course of the *Conte Rosso* since it bore you away from Bombay, and have tried to find vicarious joy in the voyage. Did not the dark water of the Indian Ocean sparkle with phosphorescence in the night? And then Aden, drab and dull, with the white glare of the hot sun, and little to see or do, except to visit the old tanks which are not worth a visit. Do you remember Djibouti near by? That was bare enough and dreary, but it had some romance for it is the gateway to Abyssinia and the interior. The only thing worth seeing was sometimes the magnificent body of a negro, like an ebony statue.

From Aden I accompanied you through the Red Sea and I could well imagine the heat. It could not have been much hotter there than in Almora at present. The *Conte Rosso* enters the Suez Canal with its sandy stretches on either side and an occasional camel going by, slouching along with its soundless feet. And Port Said with the statue of Ferdinand De Lesseps<sup>129</sup> pointing towards his great achievement.

It was pleasant to enter the cool, blue Mediterranean with all its memories of early civilizations. The Isles of 'Greece—'where burning Sappho loved and sung' (Byron's lines come back to me from the old days in Harrow when I had to learn them by heart)—and Ithaca, home of Ulysses. Your boat must have passed quite near to Ithaca, with its bare rock standing out of the sea, but I doubt if anyone pointed it out to you. Up the Adriatic, a troubled sea with rival nations on either side glaring at each other. And Venice, queen of that sea, which once 'held the glorious East in fee'. But you could only have a fleeting glimpse of her for you were bound for Trieste. I have never been to Trieste but I imagine that it has dwindled since the days before the war when it was Austria's chief port.

So we travelled together, you and mummie and I, but now I do not know what your programme is and so I have to stay in Almora jail. I am still in the tent—there is not a drop of rain and not a cloud in the sky, and the heat seems to grow worse. If it is so bad here what of the plains? *On dit* that this has been a record summer all over India and the heat has not been so intense and continuous for a long, long time. There is a permanent heat wave on and large numbers of people collapse daily unable to bear this gift of the sun god. Soon after you sailed from Bombay temperatures went up everywhere and they have continued up ever since. Even in Almora it has been 100°F. in the

129. (1805-1894); French diplomat and engineer, who constructed the Suez Canal.



shade, and in Allahabad and Lucknow 115° and 116° have been touched.

It is June. 'What a tune, kind June, you are playing all the noon', says the Harrow song. But June is not kind here and the tune it plays is not pleasant or soothing. There is one consolation: the monsoon is slowly creeping up from Colombo and the south and perhaps in another two or three weeks we shall emerge from the Turkish bath and feel cool again.

But all this grouching about the heat seems trivial and out of place in view of the appalling catastrophe that has overwhelmed Quetta and north-west India. You must have heard of it. On the last day or night of May a terrific earthquake laid a fine city and numerous towns and villages low, and where Quetta stood is now a heap of ruins, a wilderness of brick and plaster and dust covering thousands of human bodies. These mighty disasters move us and yet, as a rule, they seem far removed from us. But last year's Bihar earthquake brought them very near to me and that insight has made me realise their horror far more than I had ever done before. The Quetta earthquake is evidently on a vaster scale even than the Bihar one and estimates of the dead alone exceed fifty thousand.

And this reminds me that you must feel rather cut off from India without Indian newspapers. It seems rather silly to get a daily from India and I am not aware of a decent weekly which gives a good summary of news. There is the semi-weekly *Leader* which is a perfect rag. I do not know if you or mummie made any arrangements for papers before you left. Anyway I am arranging to have some periodicals sent to mummie. They are not newspapers in the narrower sense and they cannot take the place of one. They are the *Hindu Illustrated Weekly* of Madras, the *Modern Review* and the *Vishal Bharat* (Hindi magazine). Besides these you might get an Indian paper, perhaps *The Bombay Chronicle*, but I leave that to you and mummie.

Apart from Indian papers I would advise you to subscribe to the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*. This is cheap and good and will keep you in touch with important world happenings. You can order it through any news agent on the continent or send for it direct. You ought of course to read the local papers wherever you may be.

My flowers are fighting bravely for life but their thirst is seldom quenched. I ration out the little water I can get. I cannot complain when I know that people in Almora city have sometimes to fight for small quantities of water. Still we carry on, my flowers and I. Some of the sunflowers turned out to be enormous—nearly a foot across in diameter. The dahlias have also been a success and so also the zinnias and morning glory. Impatiently we all wait for the rains and scan the

sky for signs of clouds. Meanwhile the flowers and plants wilt and dry up.

Perhaps *en route* you looked through the second volume of *Glimpses*. It is a fearsome object, enough to frighten the bravest. Yet I hope that the inside is not so bad or heavy, though it is long. I should like to know what parts of it interested you and what parts you found difficult to follow. Probably the letters dealing with economics and financial affairs you found dull. It is a new subject for you and it takes time to get one's bearings. My own private belief is that some of my last letters dealing with the world financial situation are rather good. I have tried to explain a rather complicated process in as simple language as I could. They are very elementary of course and yet, strange as it may sound, most of our big politicians and the like are hopelessly ignorant of the subject. If you read through those two volumes you will have a better knowledge of world history and affairs and the economic and financial basis of the modern world than many a well-known politician who holds forth eloquently on the platform. Nothing like blowing one's own trumpet! But remember that the world changes so rapidly nowadays that even these last two years, since I finished writing those letters, have made them a little out of date. So much has happened and is happening before our eyes.

Among my companions in this little tent—besides you and mummie—is a picture of the Anuradhapura statue of the Buddha. For nearly three years I have had it with me and I gaze at it often finding comfort in its amazing strength and calm. You gave me a number of the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* and in this I read a sonnet on a Buddha statue which I rather liked. I wonder if you read it. In case you did not, I shall quote it here. It is by E.H. d'Alvis who is apparently a Sinhalese Buddhist.

Nay, do not mock me with those carven eyes :

I too might grow, beneath that gaze of thine,  
Desireless, immortal, unerringly wise,

Disdaining human dreams. Lo, by thy shrine  
A multitude slow-worshipping still goes

Unsandalled, bearing perfumed offerings,  
While down the avenues of time still flows

The splendid pageant of all timeless things.

Nay, do not mock me with that ecstasy,

Born of a peace abstracted from life's pain :

Love and its futile dream shall trouble me

Too briefly—I shall find myself again,

And look on thee impassioned, mute, alone,

An agelessness invincible in stone.



I am afraid I have no desire to be 'desireless, immortal, unerringly wise' and I certainly do not want to disdain human dreams. Indeed I do not believe that Gautama himself disdained them. But there is something extraordinarily attractive in that 'ecstasy, born of a peace abstracted from life's pain'. Of all the great men of the past, the Buddha attracts me more and more.

I have had no interview since I wrote to you last, nor have I had any news from anyone in India. My letters only go to and come from beyond the seas now! Day after tomorrow I am told *chhoti puphi* and Raja Bhai will come to see me. I had expected the big *puphi* also and Ranjit Bhai but apparently they are not yet at Bhowali. What they are doing in Allahabad with the children in this heat I cannot imagine.

Soon I hope a letter will come from you from Aden bringing me more news than the brief telegrams have done. Meanwhile I shall think of you in far away Europe busied with a hundred things, with new sights to engage your attention, while I go through my daily round and walk up and down my little yard and gaze at the young moon waxing bigger nightly.

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

June 9, Sunday

Interview today with Betty, Raja, Chand, Tara & Rita. Ranjit it appears has been very ill—a touch of the *loo*—and he & Nan are still in Allahabad. His health, which I used to envy so much, seems to be broken up. I feel sad about it.

Betty & Raja go back to Bombay soon. I suppose I shan't see them for many months.

News of Kamala's arrival in Vienna came sooner than I expected—on the 5th morning. She reached Vienna on the 4th—12 days after her departure from Bombay. The Italian Lloyd seems to have speeded up. I am now waiting for more detailed news about K's treatment. Also her letter & Indu's from Aden.

Madan, from all accounts, behaved like a child with a new toy in Bombay. He was evidently bucked up at the prospect of going to Europe and some new silk pyjamas & 'Russian' shirts, whatever they are, filled his mind to the exclusion of all else. Psyche writes that Indu

was the "business head of the party". Good for Indu but what of Madan?

What an arid waste is Indian humanity with few cases of intellect & character—very few. I feel depressed when I read the paper daily and notice the vulgarity all round. I cling to a hope, based on no sufficient reason, that great things can be done in India and rapidly. But doubts arise—with this material! And happenings all over the world are also depressing. Soviet Russia seems to be changing for the worse. The fine idealism that moved her is no longer apparent.

The sight of Chand, Tara & Rita today cheered me up—Chand I saw after five months, the others after nine and a half months—August 23—the day I was taken back to Naini. Rita insisted on my going out of jail with her. She would not go without me!

Sad winds where your voice was;  
Tears, tears where my heart was;  
And ever with me,  
Child, ever with me,  
Silence where hope was.

June 13, Thursday

Yesterday came a bundle of new books from Bebee. I felt cheered up not only at the books but at the thought of how she remembers me.

I have been reading, laboriously and painfully, my own production—volume 2 of *Glimpses of World History*. How tiring it is to read one's own writings—passages here and there interest and I am sometimes full of admiration for them! But to read through the whole thing is quite another story. I am doing so to correct mistakes. I had no chance of seeing the proofs—I did not even read the typescript. Indeed I never read the stuff in original or otherwise after the writing of it. Result: the book is chock-full of errors and misprints. It is really shocking how badly it has been supervised. Evidently care was not lacking, but what is one to do with sheer, unadulterated ignorance? I feel ashamed that such a production should be associated with my name.

I read this evening in the papers that Nan had been involved in a motor accident. Her car for some reason capsized in Fort Road in Allahabad and threw her out violently. The news item says that she had a narrow escape from death and that she had only a few scratches. It was comforting to know that she had escaped and yet I have felt



upset this evening. Tomorrow I shall try to send a telegram. Nan shaken up and perhaps injured—Ranjit ill—mother ill and weak—Kamala ill and far away—Indu also inaccessible—and I sitting in prison helpless and incapable of helping others!

*June 19, Wednesday*

For three days a great to-do in this jail—washing and scrubbing and shouting and cursing. The I.G. was coming for his annual inspection and the whole jail staff was in a state of fever at the prospect. Every such जनडैली<sup>130</sup> seems to be a fearsome affair for jail officials but with Salamatullah the fear is, if anything, greater. He has a terrible reputation for strictness among the staff.

He came at last at about 7-30 this morning and suddenly the noises and the shouting stopped all over the place and a hush descended upon the jail. He spent nearly six hours in the prison making a fairly thorough inspection of the little jail and probably thoroughly exhausting the supt., jailer and assistant jailers. I do not know what the result of the inspection was.

The procession came to my little tent in the course of the morning and Salamatullah spent a quarter of an hour or so with me. He does not like at all the idea of my being in jail! Told me that the jail dept. was tired of keeping me and yet there was no way out—they could not even give me remissions for my imprisonment was simple.

He asked me to send books and papers to Savitri Devi. I gladly agreed. Poor woman. She has been suffering from typhoid now for over five weeks and, although she is a little better, it must have been a terrible ordeal. I suggested that I might be allowed to see her—He was agreeable but referred me to the supt.

Asked me if I would like a transfer. I told him that my only consideration was my mother and I would like to be accessible to her. As she will be going to Allahabad next month it seems possible that I might also be transferred to Naini in July or August. So I think—He said nothing about it.

Another surprise—Before midday today a telegram came from Bhowali forwarding a message from Madan. "Atal wires from Berlin Kamala stood operation well eighteenth evening." That is, she was operated upon last evening. It was fairly quick work my getting to know of it so soon *via* Bhowali.

130. *Jandaili*, demonstration of authority.

The cable brought a sense of relief. So the operation was over. Which of the various possible operations it was, I do not know. I had no idea that Madan would be so quick about it. I am glad he did not inform me before the operation.

Two days ago I received the first letters from Kamala & Indu since their departure from Bombay. They came from Port Said or Suez and I was cheered to read them. It interested me to learn that Indu had made a great hit with *chacha* (Jagat Narayanji). He considers her an eminently sensible and well brought up girl.

I am now in my seventeenth month—16 months have been completed and less than eight months remain or to be accurate 240 days from today, fixing February 15th as the last day. Today I complete 300 days since my re-arrest on August 23rd, 1934. How a prisoner counts the days!

June 20, Thursday

Another surprise! A second letter from Indu within four days—from Vienna by air mail. A pleasing letter, long & full. It was good of the Supt. to let me have it so soon after the last.

The Supt. is not at all pleased with the I.G. I am not surprised. He was kept in the jail office for six hours continuously yesterday and then had to look after his own civil surgeon's work etc. Poor man had no rest at all while the I.G. went and had a good sleep.

I may not see Savitri Devi—It appears that all questions of interviews—letters etc. relating to her have to be referred to the C.I.D. office in Allahabad and at such interviews a C.I.D. man is present.

June 21, 1935<sup>131</sup>

Darling Indu,

I feel rich, rich beyond the dreams of avarice. Have I not had within a few days two letters from you and mummie and a cablegram? Truly in gaol this is unexpected wealth, an *embarras de richesse*, for which I am grateful to all concerned. But can I ever be embarrassed by this variety of riches?

First came your long-expected letter from *en route*—Suez, as it happened to be. Soon after, day before yesterday, I had the cable from Berlin informing me of the operation, and yesterday came your letter from Vienna. These frequent messages, and the speed with which

131. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



they came, brought you all very near to me. The sense of distance vanished and I realised more than ever how modern methods of communication and transportation make the world shrink. Madan's telegram was forwarded on to me from Bhowali and yet I received it on the forenoon of the 19th, within a few hours of the operation. Your air mail letter took just eight days to reach me. Almora is of course far from the high road and then I happen to be in prison.

I learnt of the operation with some surprise for I had not expected it quite so soon, but I felt relief also. It was well that it was over and done with. So far I have no details and do not know how successful the operation was in reaching the seat of the trouble. I am awaiting them. Meanwhile I console myself that one big hurdle has already been taken with success on the way to mummie's recovery.

As far as I can make out from your letters you had a rather thin time on board and kept largely to yourself. I was sorry for this for I had hoped that you would meet many people and would enjoy yourself. Of course, necessarily, much of your time was taken up in looking after mummie. And it was perhaps inevitable that you should not pay a visit to Cairo from Suez. Do you know that I have crossed the canal eight times and yet have never managed to visit Cairo or the Pyramids etc? Not because I was not keen on doing so—I was and am terribly keen on going there. Indeed it is partly my very desire to see them that has kept me away, strange as it may sound. I hated the idea of rushing to them like a whirlwind tourist. It seemed an insult to the Pyramids, an impertinence to the Sphinx. I wanted to go to them at leisure, in proper company or none, in proper mood, so that I might lose myself for a while in the atmosphere of the days when the Sphinx was young and the Pyramids grew up on the face of the desert. Alas, that was not to be, and life has a way of not repeating too often its opportunities.

And then Naples—I was there for nearly three days—I visited Pompeii and Vesuvius and various odd places, but not the museum. I had kept that rare delight to the last and then something happened which prevented me from going. Even then I could have paid a brief visit but that seemed to me unbecoming, for the Naples museum is one of the famous world museums, full as it is of the wonderful statuary of the early Greeks. I promised myself to return to Naples to see the museum and wander about the enchanting neighbourhood—a promise that has not been kept so far.

And now I have come to the conclusion that it is not wise to tempt life too much by passing by opportunities that may not occur again. It is always worthwhile to see a place that is worth seeing and to

meet people who are worth meeting. I may visit Italy again, I certainly hope that I shall do so, and when I go there I shall take joy from the many beautiful things that Italy contains. But now I shall go with the burden of thought and worry, with occasionally a certain fictitious importance which forces me to pose, to be unnatural, to guard my spoken word, to check almost my thoughts. To enjoy the magic beauty of Italy one must have the insouciance of care-free youth. But indeed to enjoy anything to the utmost, youth is necessary, youth not so much in years as of the spirit. According to a modern philosopher the deepest definition of youth is, life as yet untouched by tragedy; and the finest flower of youth is to know the lesson in advance of the experience, undimmed. To see the beauty of nature and of art with those undimmed and sparkling eyes is the glory of youth and the joy of life and an experience that is wonderfully worth having.

Fortunately, in spite of all its tragedy, there is plenty of beauty and art in the world. Every country, every little corner has its share. But in some ways Italy has been particularly gifted and nature and man-made art have joined hands to cast a spell on the land, an enchantment which is almost intoxicating like hashish, a smell of ancient days and a *dolce far niente* feeling which makes one forget for a while the troubles of this world.

I have, rather needlessly and completely irrelevantly, grown enthusiastic over the beauties of Italy. Partly, as you know, it is an old habit of mine to leave the high road and wander along the shady and deserted lanes and by-ways. Partly there is another and a psychological reason. What am I to write to you about from Almora jail? You have the advantage over me for you can tell me of fresh experiences, new sights, new people and all manner of other things. My life, at present is not so frightfully exciting as to bear reporting. There is a severe uniformity about it, but though serenity and uniformity may be all very well in their own way, one cannot dilate on them or grow eloquent over them. The days are singularly like each other and so are the weeks and months. My chief diversion is to count the days backwards and forwards. Almost I might say that, like Robinson Crusoe, I make a notch for a day, but possessing a calendar, every evening I cross out a date with obvious satisfaction.

Am I to tell you of my daily routine?

Rising early in the morning  
We proceed to light the fire,  
Then our majesty adorning  
In our work-a-day attire...



Of course I don't light the fire—it is fiery enough without artificial aid. But then Gilbert's lines came into my mind and I thought I might as well inflict them on you.

To go back. So you did not visit Cairo! Well, don't miss the chance next time you are round about it. You need not try to imitate your Papu in his errors of judgment and lapses. On this occasion, of course, you were perfectly right in not leaving mummie.

And your midnight shopping at Port Said and the Sindhi gentlemen who helped. How spoilt you will all get with all this care and kindness, when even the local fascists roll up, as you touch Italy, and present bouquets and harangue you in Dante's language (with modern improvements!). It is unfortunate not to appreciate all this because of one's ignorance of the language. French helped you to make a feeble bridge but you might have known that the easiest and speediest way of reaching the hearts of the visiting fascists was to salute them, fascist-fashion, with arm uplifted, and shout out: *Evviva Italia! Evviva Mussolini!* And if you felt musically inclined, to break forth into song *Giovinezza... primavera...* (or whatever the words are)—you should have seen the effect of all this on your visitors. With tears in their eyes and voice breaking with suppressed (or not suppressed) emotions, they would probably have insisted on embracing you all, including Madan Bhai.

But now you are in Berlin and you must fashion yourself accordingly. The old recipe holds with only slight variation. The salute is the same—the cry is different: *Heil Hitler!* You must have heard plenty of *evvivas* when the Italian troopships passed you on their way to Abyssinia, and now in Naziland no doubt you have heard the *heils*.

To revert to more serious topics—your dress and your hair. I am glad you have shed most of your hair. It is curious how people's ideas change with changing habits and customs. I have long been very much opposed to men's beards. I have a horror of them. I dislike moustachios even. But now even women's long hair gives me a slight feeling of uncleanness. Subhas, or for the matter of that any Bengali, will be shocked to learn this for is not hair the glory of Bengal? In the matter of dress also you had better stick to frocks, of course sporting a sari occasionally. It is not a question of the beauty of the sari but of its suitability for particular occasions. Decidedly it is not a worker's dress, it is a lounge's costume. Lounge by all means in it, but don't ski or skate or play tennis or do a host of other things in it.

Don't bother about your health or about putting on weight. One must of course follow certain well-established rules of health but for the rest of it forget your body. A healthy body does not think of

itself. To bother oneself about one's health brings about a morbid outlook—unfortunately this is pretty common in India. Most people here are valetudinarians—a long word—I wonder if you know it.

And do not trouble yourself about dieting—the very word reminds one of aged invalids. What has a young girl to do with this kind of thing. Eat what you will. Do not imagine that too much meat eating adds to one's weight or strength. Meat makes one thin. Lead a sane healthy life full of intellectual interests and suitable bodily exercise and think no more of diet, weight and the like.

I am glad that Prof. Newmann has suggested that mummie should go to Leysin after her operation. Leysin is easily accessible from Lausanne; it is even nearer than Montana and you can just see it from parts of Montana. Leysin would fit in with our programme very well and would suit you also. Indeed this was why I have been stressing all along the claims of Montana and Leysin—and I preferred the latter for various reasons. Dr. Kacker also recommended Leysin and gave letters for it. I was surprised and amused to read in your letter or mummie's that because some woman on board ship had said that Leysin was only known for treatment of bone T.B. and for children therefore you had all come to the conclusion that poor Kacker was out of date. As a matter of fact this very subject was discussed by Kacker with Madan Bhair and Kacker pointed out that there were two Leysins (or rather two distinct parts of Leysin) each with many sanatoria, hotels etc. One part deals with bone T.B. and some cures made famous by Dr. Rollier; the other part deals with the lungs etc. and has famous doctors attached to it. It was to the doctors of this other part that Kacker gave letters of introduction. Kacker is, as a matter of fact, fairly up to date in this matter as he visited Switzerland last year. Evidently Madan Bhair forgot our talk completely and was led astray by the woman on board.

As between Montana and Leysin, the latter would be preferable as it is lower than Montana. Also I think a new place would please mummie more than the old Etablissement Stephani (which, I hear, has been enlarged and modernised).

The advice I give can be of little use for it must reach you late and besides I cannot know all the facts here. You must all decide on the spot. If it is decided to go to Leysin presumably you will pass through Lausanne. In case you stop there I think it might be worthwhile to consult the physician for whom Kacker gave a letter. He gave several letters for Lausanne. Now that the operation has taken place the surgeons can be eliminated. The best known physician of Lausanne might be consulted chiefly to get into touch with him as mummie will



be staying nearby at Leysin. But of course it is not necessary to go to Lausanne for this purpose—the Leysin man is good enough. This is merely a suggestion. Madan Bhai must decide.

I have not heard from Mlle. Hemmerlin. Probably her letters went to Anand-Bhawan. You must remember that I do not get any letters now except yours and mummie's from abroad. Perhaps at my next interview *puphi* may tell me about Hemmerlin's letters.

I am glad Jal was wise enough to retain the extra volumes of *Glimpses* in Bombay. One is enough of a burden for you. I have myself been laboriously and painfully reading through volume 2. Laboriously, because it is an effort to read what one has oneself written; bits here and there interest but to read through the whole is a trial. Painfully, because it is full of mistakes. There are even more errors than I had imagined. I am afraid nothing can be done now. I have corrected my copy of the book marginally and it looks like a bundle of proof sheets full of corrections. I am asking Upadhyaya to send a list of the major corrections to the translators. He will also send you a copy of this for reference.

Yes, I received the mangoes you sent from Bombay. I have also received other mangoes since. So in this respect I am better off than you.

You must be still in Berlin when this letter reaches there and I am tempted to send it direct there. But I must resist the temptation and follow instructions. So it will go to Geneva. You expected to be in Berlin for a fortnight after the operation. I hope you can get away so soon. But I fear the stay may be prolonged.

I am still in the tent and no rain has come so far, though the clouds sometimes appear to mock us. In Bombay the monsoon has broken with a great flourish. Here it is hot and dry. Still I carry on with my faithful flowers and, since they have appeared, numbers of butterflies and moths and crowds of bees hover round them. I am reminded of a dainty Chinese story. A Chinese emperor, desiring to choose a bride, collected the most beautiful women to choose from. And each was wondrously beautiful. It became difficult to choose. So the emperor had recourse to a strange device in this beauty contest. He took them to a garden and left the choice to the butterflies! He waited to see on whom the butterflies would alight mistaking her for the most beautiful of flowers. And so the prize was awarded. A charming and artistic conception and yet imagine the embarrassment of the beautiful one pursued by butterflies, moths and bees!

Writing about the Chinese a nursery rhyme of theirs comes into my mind. It is addressed to a little girl. It describes the various good

points and uses of a number of animals—horses, dogs, cats, mice etc. and then it finishes up with the enquiry:

But what are we to do

With a little girl like you?

Of course this is a translation. I am afraid you are not quite so little now as you were and I hardly dare address you in this manner. And then you have made yourself so useful that you can stand comparison with the various animals of the Chinese poem. When you have even won the goodwill of *chacha* what more need be said?

My last interview, 12 days ago, was with *chhoti puphi* and Raja and the children—Chand, Tara and Rita. I was expecting *bari puphi* but she was still in Allahabad. Ranjit had got a bad attack of *loo* and ran a very high temperature—between 104° and 105°—for some days. Then suddenly I saw in the papers one day that *puphi* had had a toss from her car in Fort Road in Allahabad. The car had overturned and thrown her out. It was a miraculous escape for her. She and Ranjit are now at Bhowali or perhaps at Khali—I hope to see them day after tomorrow.

I was delighted to see the children—Chand I had seen in January, when the snow had fallen here, but Tara and Rita I saw after nine and a half months. They looked well—only Tara had indulged in a fall down the hill-side and had scratched herself all over. Rita was disgusted at my staying on in prison and told me so—she said it was about time I came out and indeed insisted, to the point of crying, that I should accompany her out.

Well, well, this letter must end before your patience does so. You will share it of course with mummie and parts with Madan Bhai. Having had a mental outing I must revert to my shell and resume my daily routine, to be broken again fourteen days from today. Nights, I gaze at the sky and at the pale moon as it wanes away during the dark fortnight of the month, and I wonder what you are up to, and how mummie is, and how wide the world is and yet how narrow. Time passes, though sometimes it goes very slowly, and it may be that one day, many months hence, I may join you and wander about with you on the green hill-sides of the Alps, capped with snow. Or will it be winter then, all white and dazzling, with its invitations to ski and skate and luge?

The stars come nightly to the sky,

The tidal wave into the sea;

Nor time nor space nor deep nor high

Can keep my own away from me.



I must add that soon after I finished this letter it began to rain and rain with some abundance. This is our first rain since the beginning of April—two and a half months ago. It is most welcome and things are brightening up all round me.

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

*June 23, Sunday*

I wrote to Kamala and Indu yesterday—This morning an interview—an extra one with Jamnalalji, Kailas Nath Katju & a girl whose name I forget—(Sushila,<sup>132</sup> Pyarelal's sister—apparently treated as a daughter by Jamnalalji. She is appearing for her M.B. at Delhi soon)—day after tomorrow Ranjit & Nan will come, on their way to Khali.

*June 25, Tuesday*

Interview with Nan & Ranjit and Hari—Ranjit looking pulled down, Nan fairly well. The children all unwell at Bhowali. Ranjit going to spend a month by himself at Khali....<sup>133</sup>

Nan gave me some news of the Indian world. Of Padmaja and how she has decided to pay a visit to Allahabad as soon as I am discharged—and that is a long time off yet, 235 days more to be accurate. Of Shammie and how excited she was in Mussoorie, meeting for the first time 'high society' of the type that flourishes there. Of the Kunwarani Maharaj Singh and her pride and great conceit in her new position—wife of the Home Member.

*June 26, Wednesday*

My little jail garden has got quite a reputation, at any rate in Almora town. I am told that people in the bazaars talk about it. The warders probably boom it up. The Supt., whenever he comes casts longing eyes on the zinnias and dahlias and hopes that he will share in the seeds. Salamatullah, the I.G., was also struck by some of my flowers. He rather fancies himself as an amateur gardener.

132. Dr. Sushila Nayyar attended on Mahatma Gandhi till his death. Minister, Delhi state, 1952-57; Minister for Health, Government of India, 1962-66.

133. Personal comments omitted.

A head warder has recently been transferred here from Bareilly District Jail. He was asked one day by the Supt. there, the civil surgeon, to whip a person. It was a court punishment. He refused and said that this was not his job. He was a Brahman etc. He persisted in his refusal and was fined Rs. 5/- and transferred immediately.

One of the warders who is supposed to look after me brought a slate and suggested that I might teach him the English alphabet etc. I tried to dissuade him as I thought he could not learn much within a few weeks or months. He was a retired soldier and had been made to learn 'Roman' in the army but he had forgotten. After a day or two his slate was noticed by the Supt., in the warder's absence (when another was on duty). The slate has been confiscated.

There have been a few showers of rain which have definitely eased the situation so far as the garden and the water supply are concerned. But the jail officials have not woken up to the fact yet. Although there is plenty of water available in the jail, prisoners are still sent with fetters to some spring miles away to fetch water. Several times the water they brought with tremendous trouble up hill—two big tins per person—was not wanted by anybody here. Human labour has no value in jail.

An interesting way of creating 'work', I am told, is to bang with a pole at the branches of a neem tree so that large numbers of leaves and seeds fall to the ground—and then making a prisoner pick them all up. The process to be repeated.

*June 28, Friday*

I complete eight months today in the jail!

A letter from Madan Atal from Berlin dated June 21st. Just a week from Berlin to Almora—good going.

Madan describes Kamala's operation by Prof. Unverricht, who apparently is the biggest man for this particular operation—cauterization of the adhesions. The description of the operation shows what great progress modern surgical technique has made. An electric bulb being introduced through a small wound, thus lighting up the inside—Also an eye piece..... The operation was successful.

But now another development. Indu has not been well and she was diagnosed as having a chronically inflamed appendix. So perhaps she has already been subjected to an operation also.

In today's paper there is a long list of the guests invited by the Nawab of Chhatari to meet the Governor at lunch at Naini Tal. Among them are Kunwar Anand Singh & the Kunwarani! Visions of Dehra jail!



July 4, Thursday

Indu is not to be operated upon—So I learn from a cable and letter from Madan. The cable came from Badenweiler which means that Kamala has settled down there for some time.

There has been no letter from Indu so far.

What a strange thing is the growing tip of a creeper—full of energy and life, animal-like and almost sinister looking. Even the feel is that of an animal. Sometimes it stands up erect, like a snake, and it is not difficult to imagine a snake's face and especially the eyes; sometimes it coils up or, more often, catches something in its coils. I watch these tips daily with fascination.

July 5, 1935<sup>134</sup>

TO MADAN ATAL

My dear Madan,

I have had your two letters of the 21st and 25th June and your cable about Indu. Your full account of Kamala's operation was most interesting. This successful operation is a good and comforting beginning to Kamala's treatment in Europe and I hope her recovery now will be steady and rapid. Perhaps she is already out of bed. After so many long months of it, this itself must have an inspiring effect.

You were indeed fortunate in going to such an expert as Unverricht for the operation and it is only right that you follow his advice now regarding future treatment. You propose to stay, you write to me, two or three months at Badenweiler, that is, till the end of September. This period should enable you and Unverricht to form a clear opinion of Kamala's progress. If all goes well and no fresh operation for cauterizing another adhesion is indicated, I take it that the A.P. treatment will continue, the periods when the A.P. is given being lengthened out. Presumably in such a case the question of the other operation (Sambuck's) does not arise.

In September you will presumably decide, with Unverricht's advice, whether to stay on in Badenweiler or go elsewhere. Naturally there is no question of trying experimental remedies, nor should Kamala go to a place where good medical advice is not available. But there are plenty of places to choose from and ultimately you had better abide by Unverricht's advice, unless he is indifferent. I have an idea, and I give it

134. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

to you for what it is worth, that a winter in a hill station where there is plenty of snow is very good for a T.B. patient. Ordinarily one winter is supposed to be equal to two summers. Badenweiler is probably not suitable for the winter.

About Indu, I can say nothing from here. I note that the suggested operation for appendicitis is off. Well and good. If, however, at any time the doctors there think that an operation is necessary then it must be faced. It is curious how nothing radically wrong has ever been found with Indu and yet she does not prosper. I remember, when we were last in Switzerland, I had her thoroughly overhauled by children's specialists and other doctors and they were all rather surprised at finding nothing wrong with her. And yet obviously she was below par. It was then, as now, a question of tonics etc. I am not worried about her health. I think she will get over these infantile weaknesses. Anyway, you have the best medical advice available and you must seek it whenever necessary.

There is one aspect, however, which doctors do not often pay attention to, and that is the psychological. I am convinced that to give psychological satisfaction is far more necessary than the physical satisfaction of tonics. This, in my opinion, requires a life of mental and physical activity in a pleasant atmosphere with companions and fellow students. This leads to growth, physical and mental, the lessening of the feeling of self-consciousness and self-centredness, and the development of the spirit of cooperation. I am no believer in our present-day home life for children except from time to time in the shape of holidays. This is especially so in the case of only children who have no companions at home and who are apt to get terribly self-centred and maybe even morbid.

Of course I do not mean to imply that Indu is at all morbid or given that way. I am happy to know that her outlook is fairly sane and healthy but she has just a tendency to introspection which is not to be encouraged at her age. It is all very well for me sitting in Almora jail to be introspective. For her, life should beckon out—she should be an extrovert not an introvert, and for this purpose it is desirable and necessary for her to live as much as possible in large, cooperative and educational surroundings. It is a curious fact worth noticing that almost always Indu has kept better health in school or college than at home, although she had far better food at home. The moral is obvious. Away from home she lived more of a community life and was less conscious of herself and so she prospered. At home, inevitably there was coddling and arguing and an attempt to feed up and consequent disinclination to eat and a want of suitable companions etc.



That Indu will get over her petty physical short-comings I have no doubt. My chief concern is that she should not acquire at this age the invalid's mentality, which is so common in India. And the best way to escape from it is to keep busy and not to pay too much attention to diet and the like.

I am writing to Kamala and Indu regularly every fortnight by air mail and so you will get news of me. Whenever necessary I shall write to you also. I hope you will also write to me from time to time to tell me how Kamala is getting on.

You have asked me to send letters for some time c/o American Express, Berlin, and this letter will therefore go to that address. But if you are settled down at Badenweiler, why should I not write direct to that address?

Yours affly.,  
Jawahar

July 5, 1935<sup>135</sup>

Darling Indu,

The last fortnight has been a blank one so far as any letter from you is concerned. I suppose you wanted to make up for your extravagance of the fortnight before. Mummie of course could not write because of her operation. I have had, however, two letters from Madan Bhai from Berlin. He has given me a full account of the operation. He also told me that you were not exactly flourishing like the green bay tree. You have been made to swallow bismuth meal and have been screened and radiographed, and your appendix has been held to blame, and a threat to cut it off has been held forth. Poor appendix! But the latest news is that a reprieve has been granted to it, and you are going to be (or more probably, are being at the present moment) stuffed with tonics and powerful foods and drinks.

I do not particularly fancy your hob-nobbing too closely with the tribe of doctors. They are excellent people and I admire them greatly, but, on the whole, I prefer to keep at a distance from them professionally, and I have a feeling that medicine is usually better outside me than inside me. Of course under certain circumstances one must go to them and even swallow medicine, or get cut up. Surgery attracts me rather more than medicine. You can yourself form some idea of

what wonderful progress it has made. For the matter of that even medicine has gone ahead pretty fast in a variety of ways—but not so far in our beloved country.

However, all this is an aside. You must of course follow doctors' advice and if they insist on cutting you up, submit to their will. An operation for appendicitis is not very terrible after all. When I was a student in England it used to be quite fashionable especially among society women, and even quite healthy women would, perfectly needlessly, have their appendices cut out, paying heavily for this gratification of their desire to be up to date and smart. Probably there is no such passion for this operation now but nevertheless it is common enough. Medical men have come to the conclusion that the appendix is a totally useless organ. There is a theory, I believe, that it is remotely connected with a tail which our simian ancestors had—a perpetual reminder of what we were. The tail has gone but the appendix still carries on uselessly. Perhaps in the course of a few thousand years this also will go.

Still I am glad that no present operation is indicated for you. I am afraid I have no use for such 'fashion' and to cut up the body is not to be encouraged unless necessity compels one. More and more I feel that health comes from inside rather than outside, from the observance of simple rules of life and activity, and at the same time from almost forgetting the body rather than tending it carefully like a hothouse plant. The body must be looked after, that is its due and is essential for our proper functioning. But to make of it an invalid and to think and speak continually of its pains and troubles is not only a most distressing habit (alas, so prevalent in our country!) but is calculated to make its condition worse. I sometimes feel that speaking about disease and illness, except in the case of necessity, should be forbidden by law. If such a law was passed in India, I am afraid quite fifty per cent of our subjects for conversation and small talk would disappear and many of our middle class folk would be tongue-tied. Is it not terrible how they discuss repeatedly and at length their painful and unsavoury ailments?

I remember a book, a famous one—Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*—in which a society is described where illness itself was made a crime; the more serious the illness, the heavier the sentence. On the other hand, crime, so-called now, was treated as a social disease to be treated by experts and not to be punished. The idea was carried to an extreme in the book, with some inevitable absurdities, but the way it pointed was correct. Read the book, it is worth it.

Where are you to get the books I suggest to you, you might well ask. You must know the Tauchnitz edition of English and American works published, I think, in Leipzig and for sale all over the Continent.



This is a wonderfully complete edition of almost all worthwhile books in the English language and it is far cheaper than the original edition in England or America. Any local bookseller will get Tauchnitz books for you and you can keep their fat catalogue.

So you are all in Badenweiler now and likely to remain there for two or three months more. I do not know that little town but I know well enough that all that neighbourhood is very beautiful, perhaps the best part of Germany, from nature's point of view. Very near you is the Black Forest, the Schwazwald, full of beauty spots. Not far is the Rhineland and the banks of the Rhine must be covered with the vine in these summer days (or am I mistaken about the season?). You were with us, were you not, when we steamed up the Rhine, following its winding course through town and countryside, passing its great rocks with frowning castles seated atop of them, and legends of long ago clinging to them. There was the great rock where the Lorelei<sup>136</sup> used to sit and sing and lure unhappy sailors to their destruction. And so we passed from Cologne to Mainz and thence to the old delightful city of Heidelberg. Do you not remember it, and the river Neckar and the professor of geology who took us reverently and proudly to his cabinet to show the ancient skull of the *Homo Heidelbergiensis*, that half-ape, half-man, one of the links in the missing chain of early human development? I am very fond of Heidelberg and several times I have been there, once with Dadu so long ago as 1909 to pay a visit to Shridhar *chacha* who studied there and lived in a pension run by a professor over 80 years old. That professor's one consuming passion was hatred for England and I believe he died during the war years through very excess of anger and hatred.

Freiburg is of course your very near neighbour and I suppose Wiesbaden cannot be far off. Bad Ems and Hamburg, if I remember aright, must also be round about somewhere. To both these places Dadu and Dolamma went when they first put me at Harrow. It was at Ems that *puphi's* (the elder one's—there was only one then) fifth birthday was celebrated, and Dadu gave a party to all the municipal school children of the place and the mayor or burgomaster, or whatever he is called, attended in state. Old memories come back to me and I write them down, thinking that they might interest you.

So you are in a beautiful land and the early summer must have covered the hill-sides with flowers. I hope you will take some advantage of your position and have an occasional excursion. I am sure

136. On this cliff on the Rhine, according to German legend, lived a siren who by her singing lured sailors to their death.

you will give pleasure to mummie if you do so, rather than if you remain with her all the time.

You have been now just over a month in Europe and you have seen something—not much I am afraid—of two of its great capitals. How did you like them, Vienna and Berlin? Berlin, with all its pomp and circumstance, is not very impressive. Munich, I think, is a more fascinating German town, and the Germans themselves have a saying: see Munich and die. Apart from its old fascination it has got a new and a wonderful appeal—the great Deutsches Museum built since the war. This is really something magnificent and worth going all the way from India to see.

When you were in Vienna it struck me how foolish I had been in omitting to have Czecho-Slovakia added in your passports. I hope you will get this defect remedied at some British Consulate. There will be no difficulty and it is as well to be prepared. You might also add Belgium and Holland. Suppose you want to pay a visit to Nanu at Prague or Praha as they call it? The city is said to be very beautiful. I have never seen it although I spent a month quite near it with Dadu at Carlsbad. Dadu wanted to go there because he said a resident of Prayag in India ought to visit this Prague of Europe! But he couldn't manage it. He was taking the 'cure' then at Carlsbad for his asthma etc.—Most people there come to get thin—So did old King Edward VII who used to visit Marienbad nearby regularly. It was rather comic to see crowds of people moving up and down every morning and evening before the springs with little mugs sipping the particular spring water that had been prescribed for them. I tasted this stuff once and turned away from it in disgust.

Then there were the baths at Carlsbad, a tremendous variety of them. One of the popular baths for getting thin was a mud bath. Another bath, and I tried this for the fun of it, was a carbonic acid bath, that is, soda water. This was a delightful affair and I must say that it filled one with energy.

I suppose Badenweiler has also got, on a smaller scale, its baths and springs. All these 'Bads' have them. I remember to have read in stories and accounts of central and western Europe in the old days how the feudal lords and the Jewish financiers and the petty chiefs of German principalities—there were so many of these then—used to crowd at Baden Baden.

I read the other day in the papers with immense surprise that there had been an earthquake shock in Wurtemberg and west Switzerland; I wonder if you in Badenweiler felt it.



It is 17 days since mummie's operation and I hope that she can walk about a little now. I am very keen on her leaving her bed and getting out of the perpetual invalid atmosphere which bed always carries with it. Of course she must take care for a long time and carry out carefully doctors' orders and in this matter Professor Unverricht, the surgeon who operated, must have the last word. He is now more or less in charge of mummie and his advice should therefore be taken. I hope she will make good progress and by next month go about a little.

This stay in Badenweiler is somewhat different from what we had anticipated and I do not quite know how it will affect your programme. But in this matter I must not interfere, for any advice that I may give is sure to be belated and out of place. You must yourself decide having regard to mummie's condition, your own health and other factors. There is of course no hurry for you to leave mummie. Remain with her as long as necessary. From your own health point of view I think regular mental occupation and companionship of fellow students is more important than tonics and the like. Such occupation and companionship draw us out of ourselves and we forget our narrow selves in cooperative habits and wider questions. We grow and health comes to us unasked. I am convinced that the mind plays a most important part in our physical make-up.

Badenweiler is near the Swiss and French frontiers, but still it is a longish journey to Lausanne. I imagine you will have to go to Basle and then to Berne, the Swiss federal capital, a delightful city with arcades and covered foot-paths. I have an idea that a light railway goes from Berne to Lausanne over the mountains and the route is a very beautiful one. I have passed through it both in winter and summer. So although near on the map, you are really further away from Lausanne or Bex than you would be if you were in Paris or Milan. Still you are not very far. It might be worthwhile for you, when you can conveniently manage it, to pay a week-end visit to Mlle. Hemmerlin.

Should you be staying on in Badenweiler for a considerable time why not utilise your time there to pick up some German and improve your French? If not at Badenweiler, you could go to Freiburg for it. The best way to learn a new language is to grow up with it, almost like a child does. If you could get to know some German family, make friends with a *Fraulein*; you could not only have some lessons from them but mix with them and listen to their talk. Indeed such friendship would be good in many ways. You could have companions of your age to go about with and the way to know a country is to know its people and try to understand them. It is an English habit to live in a stuck-up stand-offish way in foreign countries. It is not a good habit. We should



indeed go out of our way to make friends. That is a courtesy we owe to the country we are in and it pays well for it brings us intimate glimpses and friendship, and it helps us to grow out of our narrow national selves.

To come to a less interesting topic—myself. Here I am still in my little tent and the big *barsat* seems to have come. We have had only one really heavy rain so far here but probably there will be plenty more soon to follow, and I shall get fed up with it and yearn for a clear sky. The air has definitely changed, it is the atmosphere of the चौमासा<sup>137</sup> as the monsoon season is called in our countryside. In Allahabad, reports say that the monsoon gave a grand kick-off with over 4 inches of rain, with the result that George Town was overwhelmed and half its streets are cracked and sunk in.

The delayed monsoon and the long hot weather was favourable for mangoes, *on dit*, and the mango crop has been most abundant. I tell you of this just to make you green with envy.

What do I do? Perhaps you have heard the story of the old villager who when asked how he spent his time after he had been pensioned off, made answer: 'Well, Miss, sometimes I sits and thinks, and sometimes I just sits.' That is the favourite occupation not only of our peasantry but of most of our so-called educated classes and mostly, I imagine, 'they just sit'. I have not quite got to the stage of just sitting, even though I am in prison, but a subtle change has come over me during the past few months. It has not come uninvited. I asked for it. The change consists of a diversion of interest from purely intellectual pursuits to manual ones. I had become too much of a bookworm, reading, reading and writing for most of my time. Outside, strenuous activity and moving about prevented my from becoming too lop-sided. In prison that activity being denied my interests became too intellectual. Of course I had relief in the past by spinning and weaving etc. I liked them but they seemed to be extraneous activities, my main function being reading and writing, and as you know to your cost I produced 1500 printed pages during my last term! That is not so now. I have read relatively little and at the slightest pretext I put aside my book. Living in the tent has helped in the process and the cloudy weather has also lured me out. When I used to be locked up soon after five in the evening I had no alternative but to read. Now I can stroll up and down my yard usually armed with a खुरपी<sup>138</sup> messing about my flowers.

137. *Chaumasa*.

138. *Khurpi*, a trowel.



I have always been a bit of a student, trying to learn to understand, but largely this effort was intellectual. There was also the emotional element in it, the learning from crowds, the appreciation of mass psychology. Latterly I have felt drawn more and more towards nature—to plants and animals. Maybe it is a relief and an escape from human folly, human cowardice and human knavery! I feel more in tune with nature. I notice little things that I had not noticed before. I sense the pulsating and throbbing life round about me. I notice the sensitive growing tip of a creeper plant, how full of life and energy it is! Animal-like it seems and sometimes almost sinister looking; even the feel is hairy as that of a young animal. It stands up seeking for something to catch hold of. See, it looks just like a snake, with a snake's rounded nose and small eyes! Or it coils up, catching something in its grasp. Fascinated, I watch it.

I feel that this is a hopeful sign in me. I am growing still, getting more educated, more in harmony with life. If only human beings were not such spots of disharmony! Three years ago died a very great man, though he is not very well known. He was a Scot, Patrick Geddes<sup>139</sup> and he was a genius in many fields. He even came to Allahabad once and drew up a scheme for its town-planning! He was a great educator and instead of the three Rs he used to lay stress on the three Hs—heart, hand, head. He wanted children to grow up with a first-hand knowledge of the worlds of nature and of man and to develop an unspoiled appreciation of life, the beauty of nature, of the human mind etc. The first approach for the child thus came through the heart, through the emotions—the affection of parents, the enjoyment of fresh air, sunshine etc. Then came the hand as the child grew older. Petty manual tasks in the garden or some craft. Then at last came the head, and curiously, the intellectual development of the child, who had gone through the course of heart and hand, was very rapid—far quicker than the child who began with intellectual teaching only. More important still, such children developed what is called a well-integrated personality, something in harmony with life and nature, the very reverse of the quarrelsome, dissatisfied, ever-complaining type that we see so often today.

Towards the end of his long life Geddes started a 'Cité Universitaire' at Montpellier in the south of France, where every type of student came to him—the Ph.D., graduate and undergraduate. However learned the

139. (1854-1932); professor of sociology and civics, university of Bombay; took an interest in city improvement and town planning and tried to relate biological knowledge with civic welfare; author of *Outlines of General Biology*, *Cities in Evolution* and *The Life and Work of Sir Jagdish C. Bose*.

student, his first job was digging in the garden, his second, observation of the sea and the country from a watch-tower and by wandering about and then came intellectual study.

I sometimes console myself that I am in my own topsy-turvy way following Geddes' course and so trying to develop that integrated personality. Having become somewhat of a highbrow I have tried to lay more stress on the hands. Whether the result is going to be satisfactory it will be for others to judge. Let us hope it will not be too much of a mongrel type, neither here nor there! To a large extent Tolstoy and Ruskin advocated manual labour for this purpose. And the real psychological basis of Bapu's charka is also this.

Are you not tired of me, Indu-boy, writing all this stuff to you and wearying you even at this great distance with my wordy chatter? Once a fortnight I have the chance and I let my pen run on. You will have to bear with me. But I have written so much already today that I really must put a brake on, though my pen protests and wants to scratch on. Share this letter with mummie and Madan Bhai.

I am sending separately to mummie 3 snaps of Anand Bhawan and Swaraj Bhawan. Someone whom I don't know sent them to me (having signed them!). Perhaps they might interest you so I am sending them.

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

*July 18, Thursday*

For two weeks I have not written in this book. I have not felt cheerful—far from it—and the days have dragged on heavily and wearily. Yet the monsoon is firmly established and even my little garden looks bright and gay. I have been reading very little. I am still in the tent.

Yesterday a cable came from Madan from Badenweiler to say that no letters had been received from me for five weeks. Extraordinary—what has happened to the long screeds I have been writing? I wired back that I had sent letters c/o Cook, Geneva. Today another cable came from him to say that Cook's letters had been received by them but none from me has come for five weeks. This means that my last three letters have gone astray. I have felt upset and depressed because of this. And how worrying it must have been for Kamala to wait for letters daily and wait in vain!

Inquiries at the post-office here elicited the fact that my letters had been despatched. Nothing more doing. The jail people have



been decent enough about it and don't think they are to blame. What does it matter who is to blame? The fact remains that my letters disappear somewhere.

The eighteenth month has begun! Only six months and a bit more.

July 19, 1935<sup>140</sup>

Indu dear,

I sit down to write to you and cover sheet after sheet of thin air mail paper, trying somehow to bridge the many thousand miles that separate us. I hope that my letters will carry with them, somewhere hidden away between the lines, a bit of me to you, and that if you care to look for it, you will find it, just as I seek for you in your letters, behind and between the lines that you have written. What indeed are letters? Not surely just budgets of news, although they contain news. Not a record of illness and birth and marriage and death and humdrum domestic happenings, such as are most of the letters that people write. They are something far more; they are, or ought to be, bits of the personality of the writer, quivering shadows of the real self. They are also, or they at least endeavour to represent and to mirror, something of the personality of the person written to, for the writer is full of the person he is writing to. Thus a real letter is a strange and revealing amalgam of the two—the one who writes and the one who receives. If it is such a real letter, it has considerable value for both the persons concerned.

I have been led to this musing on letters because I have learnt that my letters have not been reaching you and I have been pained at this unexpected and unwelcome news. Cables from Madan Bhai have informed me of it and I am at a loss to know why this has happened. I have been pained at the thought of mummie and you expecting my letters, waiting day after day for them, and waiting in vain. Few things are more distressing than to expect something which does not come. It upsets one, irritates and worries. So you must have been put out. I was pained also at the thought that my letters, which I had sent out with so many messages and loving thoughts, to fly over two continents to you, should have gone astray. I felt almost as if I had been physically hurt. And then it was disheartening. To have to write once a fortnight only is a poor enough bond, but if even that snaps?

I can't make out what can have happened to my letters. They have been sent regularly every fortnight. Ever since you people went away I have written to no one in India. Every two weeks my letter has gone addressed to mummie with a long enclosure in it for you. They were addressed care of Thos. Cook, Geneva, but the last one went care of the American Express, Berlin, as desired by Madan. I am a methodical person as a rule anywhere; in prison I am even more so and my life is governed by a routine. As for letters etc., I write them with the regularity of a good clock. You may rest assured that I have sent my letter on the appointed day whether you receive it or not. And you may also rest assured that not receiving a letter cannot mean that I am unwell for in that event also I shall write to you or have a message sent. So far as I can make out my letters have been despatched regularly from here. Inquiries were made at the post-office also. The probability therefore is that something went wrong at the other end. You have been moving about. Perhaps Cook's forwarded the letters to Vienna or Berlin after you left, in spite of your instructions. Such mistakes are often made. You should always take care to leave your address at every hotel you stay at....

To get on to your last letter. Yes, I was a little surprised to see the superscription—Hotel Adlon. I had expected you to be in Badenweiler. Also I was a little surprised at the choice of hotel for the Adlon is supposed to be the most expensive hotel in Berlin and rather a flashy kind of place, frequented by the newly-rich intent on display. It is not considered a select place. Probably the Kaiserhof is better in that respect. But these are very petty considerations and for a short stay of one or two persons there is not much difference in the charges so far as the ordinary rooms are concerned. The real difference comes in the suites and above all in food. Personally I think it is always safer in a new city to go to a good well-known hotel even though it may be expensive. If necessary feed outside more cheaply. If a longer stay has to be made then one can shift to less expensive quarters. So I am glad you went to the Adlon rather than to a cheaper hotel. I am also glad you stayed on in Berlin for a few days after mummie left and had a look-round. I want you to shift for yourself as much as possible.

I am not very happy about your health. Madan Bhai wrote to me that the doctors were of opinion that there was nothing fundamentally wrong with you. So far so good; but it is not good enough. You must not feel weak and headache and have frequent pains. This has to be seen to or otherwise both your physical and intellectual development will be interfered with. My own attitude to ill-health is, I am



afraid, rather intolerant and aggressive—it is, as I wrote to you in a previous letter (which you have not got!)—the very opposite of the usual valetudinarian attitude prevalent in India. I dislike it, consider it almost indecent and do not feel much sympathy for the person who willingly indulges in it. Perhaps this is due to my own youthful record. After I had got rid of certain infantile ailments I developed a healthy body and during all the long years I was at Harrow, Cambridge and in London I never spent a day in bed owing to illness. My one visit to a doctor was at Harrow when my shins had been rather badly kicked at football. I paid no special attention to my health. I simply lived a normal life and looked down upon those who were often ill or who frequently complained of their bodily troubles. (One of the trials of my existence in India is that people will insist on discussing their physical ailments when I am not at all interested in them.) So I grew up rather conceited about my bodily fitness and with the belief that anybody who wanted to be fit could certainly keep so. Illness only came as a rule when invited to do so. In later years in India I taxed my body very hard and took a lot of physical and intellectual work out of it and I must say that it behaved very well.

During the last four or five years, however, that conceit and assurance of good health have partly left me. This has been so ever since I have had some pleuritic trouble. But I do believe that it has been my general good health and habits of life that have kept down this trouble to very small proportions. In another person not so fit or not so aggressively disliking illness as I do, the trouble would have probably grown. Even now I am confident that I can keep it in check and carry on normally for a long time to come.

Now I do not want you to worry or grow morbid about your little physical troubles. These growing pains do not mean much. But at the same time they should be attended to so that they may not weaken your constitution. Doctors will advise you and you should follow their advice, but personally I attach far more importance to healthy surroundings and healthy life and habits. Live in a good place with decent food, exercise etc. and devote yourself to intellectual and other pursuits without thinking too much of the body. But do not overdo anything—do not tire yourself.

Regarding your future studies, the question of your health has to be borne in mind, and this was one of the reasons why I wanted you to stick to Suisse. There were other reasons also. I did not fancy most of the other possible university towns. Germany seems to be out of the question even if it be true that Berlin has the best professors. But I doubt that statement now—the best German professors are out of



Germany and the whole atmosphere of German education today is oppressive and stifling and altogether wrong. You mention Rome—why you thought of it I do not know for there is no special argument in its favour and there are many against it. Then there is Paris and much can be said for it but I am sure that for the present it must be ruled out. I do not fancy these great big cities as educational centres. There is too much else doing there. But the reason that weighs with me more is the one of health. Paris is not a particularly healthy place. For the moment I am not thinking of the English universities. You may of course go to them later. So we are left with Suisse. I am not a particular admirer of the very middle class, bourgeois, stodgy Swiss character. It is rather commonplace, but then it is so easy to criticize everybody and everything!

I feel sure that Switzerland is indicated for you at present and at least for a year or so. Afterwards we shall see. I have got out of the habit of making long-distance decisions. Suisse is certainly more expensive than neighbouring countries but for a student this will not make much difference; and then in these days of currency fluctuations one can never tell which country will be more or less expensive. Another reason why I prefer Suisse is because of Mlle. Hemmerlin (there are 2 ms and not one m as you told me!). It will be better if you are within easy distance of her and can consult her from time to time.

In Suisse there are three possible universities—Geneva, Lausanne and Zurich, the two former more French, Zurich more German. You will find that people connected with Germany will naturally favour Zurich while those connected with France will recommend Geneva and Lausanne. In this matter I think you had best follow Mlle. Hemmerlin's advice. It is always possible on the Continent to change universities—it is a good practice.

As for the course you should take, I should not bother very much just at present. Nanu's advice was good that you should join a university and give the entrance exam later. But Mrs. Geissler's criticism is sound. The burden on you will be too much—to attend lectures and at the same time to prepare for the entrance exam—and all this in new languages. Therefore you must not bother about the entrance exam or even regular courses of lectures. Your first job is to feel at home with the languages and get healthy. When you can easily combine with these the attendance of lectures or any other work, do so. But not till then. Remember that students on the Continent—both at school and university—have to work far harder than students in England. I do not want you to join this tread-mill too soon. Take your time and fit yourself for it before you do so. I am not keen on



examinations and I do not believe that true education consists in passing them. To some extent one has to face them in the modern world as it is, but let us not make a fetish of these.

Therefore do not worry about exams at present. Have an easy time and stick to languages. Where are you staying for this? Certainly you can stay at Badenweiler near mummie and work with Mrs. Geissler at the languages. From the health point of view this would be good. Or you can go to Mlle. Hemmerlin. Or you can spend part of your time at one place and part at the other. Decide for yourself in consultation with Mlle. Hemmerlin. You have other people to advise you too—Nanu and others—and you should consult them whenever you feel like it, but on the whole it would be desirable to follow Mlle. Hemmerlin's advice.

I am very glad mummie is pleased with her new companion, Mrs. Geissler. The name seems to be familiar to me. I wonder where I came across it before.

*Puphi* told me that a letter had come for me from Mlle. Hemmerlin. I am asking *puphi* to write to her. When you meet Romain Rolland and his sister give my regards to them.

I am sending you through mummie a little book—J.F. Horrabin's *Atlas of European History*. This is an excellent collection of historical maps and it will help you with the *Glimpses*. Horrabin has also prepared a very good *Atlas of Current Affairs* which I would advise you to get. It is a cheap book but it helps greatly in understanding current problems. If Horrabin would bring out similar atlases for Asia and America the whole of *Glimpses* would be covered!

I have asked Upadhyaya to send you lists of corrections in volumes 1 and 2 of *Glimpses*—There are crowds of errors and some of these are extraordinary and misleading. When you get them it would be worthwhile for you to make the corrections in the body of the book. The petty corrections can be ignored.

Betty has sent me some snaps taken by Raja at the sanatorium. They are rather good, especially one of yours standing. Probably she has sent you copies also. Why not get yourself photographed at a decent photographer's? I should love to have a good photograph.

My future letters will be sent to Badenweiler, Hans Waldeck, addressed to mummie, till I hear to the contrary.

I hope the pine-clad hill-sides of the Black Forest have done you good—and the swimming. You are in Baden at the best time of the year.

It was the full moon two or three nights back and the magic of its radiance drew me out of my little tent (for I am still encamped).

For a long time I watched it playing hide and seek in the clouds, seemingly hurrying away at times and then standing serenely still, peeping at me through a rift in the clouds or over their edge, sometimes so near and dazzling and then far away, distant and vague, behind a dark veil. It was a great game. In the moonlight even the ugly jail walls toned down and lost their hardness. Everything was soft and dreamy—I thought of some lines of a vagabond or hiker's song:

Heigh! brother mine, art a-waking or a-sleeping;  
Minds't thou the merry moon a many summers fled?  
Minds't thou the green and the dancing and the leaping?  
Minds't thou the haycocks and the moon above them creeping?

I suddenly thought of you and wondered if you might not also be enjoying the moonlight and looking up at the same old moon. But, foolish thought! While it was night here, it must have been the late afternoon in Baden with the sun shining brightly and the moon and the stars invisible, awaiting the coming of night.

With the full moon passed the month of आषाढ़<sup>141</sup> and श्रावण<sup>142</sup> began, the typical month of the rainy season. With it also ended my seventeenth month in prison this time!

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

August 2, 1935<sup>143</sup>

Letter No. 6

Darling Indu,

Fridays are special days for me. On Fridays, alternate ones, I write to you and mummie, and on the intervening Fridays I expect your letters. And so, last Friday I waited for your letter and my desire for it was greater even than usual for I was worried about the disappearance of my letters to you people and hoped to have some information on this point. Also an item of news in the papers about mummie's health had been disturbing. Your letter however did not come on that day and I was a little disappointed. It came, however, three days later. It was dated July 18th but had evidently been posted much later for it bore the postmark 22nd July. Fortunately now even missing an air mail does not mean much delay. I believe there

141. *Ashadh*, the fourth month of the lunar year.

142. *Sravan*, the fifth month of the lunar year.

143. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



are at least five air mail services every week from Europe to India and beyond—two British, two Dutch, and one French. They all pass through Allahabad. But I suppose our letters are carried only by the British line.

You will note, perhaps with some surprise, the superscription: Letter No. 6. This is to indicate that this is the 6th letter I have written to you since your departure, and I propose to number my subsequent letters also accordingly, so that if any letter is missed by you, you can immediately tell. Indeed you could have presumed as much, but after the unfortunate experience we have had I propose to take no risks. Of the letters I have already sent you it appears that you have not received Nos. 2 and 3, dated June 7th and 21st. The first of these must have reached Cook's in Geneva while you were still in Vienna and it is quite possible that it was forwarded to your Vienna address—Hotel Bristol. The second might have also gone there by mistake or to Berlin. You should enquire at both places. Cook's are no doubt to blame but you should also be more wide awake in such matters. Wherever you may go to, even for a day, you should leave your address for letters and special instructions.

I am very happy to learn of your progress in the German language. Evidently you have a linguistic bent which certainly you have not inherited from your father. German is a fine language and the Germans are in many ways a fine people—brave, hard-working, disciplined, learned. But—there are always buts of course—learning does not sit lightly on them, nor is humour a failing of theirs. They are apt to be a little heavy, slow in the uptake, as the Americans say. I hope you will imbibe the many virtues of the Germans but there is no reason why you should also follow them in their failings and become mentally a little obese. In this respect the mental quickness and lightness of touch of the French is preferable.

You will wonder why I am indulging in this digression. Your last letter is the immediate cause of it. It made me feel that you did not display what might be called the qualities of a Sherlock Holmes in regard to the non-receipt of my letters, and even after my telegram you seem to take it for granted that I had written after five or six weeks. You chide me gently: '26th May to 5th July is rather more than a fortnight, is it not?' Yes it is, my dear, even my arithmetic is capable of that intricate calculation. But, I wondered, did you know me so little as to think that I would refrain from writing to you and mummie for five weeks? And, even so, did the idea not strike you when you received my letter after all this interval, that I would at least explain the delay? And then in my cable I had said that 'letters' sent care



Cook's—that meant more than one letter, and you have so far received only one letter from Geneva. Finally if you read my letter dated 5th July carefully you will find internal evidence in it that previous letters were sent. I must confess to having sent much too brief and vague a cable in reply to Madan Bhai's. I wish I had sent a clearer message; but the desire to be economical influenced me at the wrong time.

As you are evidently linguistically inclined it is as well for you to encourage this bent and acquire languages. We lack linguists in India and we need them. It is one of my secret sorrows that I am not good at languages. The amount of trouble I have taken over French and German ought to have made me know them far more than I do. I have nourished a grievance against my old childhood tutor, F.T. Brooks,<sup>144</sup> who might have easily taught me French well at the right age. His mother was French and he knew the language perfectly. At that age I could have picked it up rapidly and naturally. But he thought otherwise. In prison I have laboured fairly hard at German and I have gone through carefully and laboriously Otto's fat grammar. After that, in theory at least, I ought to be able to read and write German with some ease. As a matter of fact I seem to have forgotten most of it and I can't read the simplest book in it. Perhaps the labour has not been wasted altogether and somewhere at the back of my mind there is buried a vague knowledge of German which can be unearthed with a pick and shovel, if real need arises. However that may be, it is clear that I am no linguist and I rather admire those who are—at the same time I have a suspicion that people who dabble in many languages are often rather superficial and lack depth. They become Jacks at many tongues and master none.

So, by all means, concentrate on languages—German and French for the moment. I should not trouble myself, if I were you, about the university entrance exam at this stage. Certainly you can attend lectures in subjects of your interest as soon as you can follow them. But if you prepare for the exam you may have to do all manner of subjects—perhaps Latin for aught I know. I really don't see why you should learn Latin. You will do a good year's work if by next summer you have got a fairly good knowledge of the languages plus such odd knowledge of special subjects as you may acquire. I suppose I shall meet you before then. Somehow I cannot imagine your spending the next three or four years at a Swiss university. Therefore the exam is less important than the languages etc.

144. An ardent theosophist and tutor of Jawaharlal at Allahabad from 1902 to 1904.



I like Nanu's suggestion (or was it your idea?) that you might learn Russian at Praha or elsewhere. Among present-day languages it is one of the most important and it grows in importance. Remember that it is the language of a territory bordering our country—our neighbours speak it. Its past literature is fascinating, its new literature is unique of its kind. Sometime or other I would like you to go to the country from the educational point of view and a knowledge of the language would of course make a tremendous difference. The education there is the most scientifically up to date that can be found anywhere. This really applies not to the university stage but to the very early stages beginning from babyhood and the creche period. The best time to learn anything is, it is said, when the babe begins to crawl! I am afraid you are too old for that now! What I like about Russian education is the attempt at producing harmony between hand and mind and heart. They want to produce harmonized, integrated, poised human beings, not the lop-sided people, unhappy and irritable persons that are so often met with. The ultimate success of this education remains still to be seen but already rather remarkable results have been obtained. Neurosis, the common disease of our civilization, is very rare in Russia now. Partly no doubt the change is due to a new and fairer social structure.

It surprises me more and more how people go through life with their eyes shut to its varied beauty as well as its terrible misery. It is extraordinary how blind and insensitive they can be, and I imagine that our middle classes in India take the cake in this respect. Which reminds me of a bright little poem which might interest you. It is a modern poem—I forget the name of the author. It is said to have been written to a woman seen from a train :

O why do you walk through the fields in gloves  
missing so much and so much?

O fat white woman whom nobody loves

Why do you walk through the fields in gloves

When the grass is soft as the breast of doves

And shivering sweet to the touch?

O why do you walk through the fields in gloves  
missing so much and so much?

No doubt you see plenty of such men and women in Badenweiler. But, though gloves are not sported in India, such people swarm here.

In one of my letters I asked you to subscribe to the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*. Perhaps that was one of the letters you missed.



It is really awful for you to be cut off regarding news from India as well as the rest of the world and have to rely on the stodgy and heavy *Daily Telegraph*. Most other English papers would be more interesting than this, but as you point out, many of them are *verboden*.<sup>145</sup> I have now sent instructions to Upadhyaya to arrange the supply of a number of papers to you from India and England. The Indian periodicals are: *The Hindu Illustrated Weekly* (from Madras), *The Times of India Weekly* (this is not the *Illustrated Weekly*), the *Pratap* (Hindi weekly of Cawnpore), the *Modern Review* and the विशाल भारत.<sup>146</sup>

This bunch will give you some Indian news. I am not entirely satisfied with it but I can think of no better. It is rather silly getting a daily from India. All these papers will be addressed to mummie.

The Times Book Club, London, is being asked to send mummie: *The Times* (weekly edition), the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* and *The Listener* (weekly)—but I am not sure if the *Manchester Guardian* is permitted in Germany. Anyhow you will get a fair bunch every week. *The Listener* is the organ of the British Broadcasting Corporation. It contains broadcasts and articles and many of these are good. I wonder if you can get the British broadcasts in Badenweiler. Probably you have no private radio at your disposal and the public radios are full of German broadcasts.

All these papers from India and England will be addressed to mummie to the Badenweiler address. Whenever an address is going to be changed you must write to Upadhyaya to inform the Indian periodicals concerned, and you should yourself write directly to the English papers or the Times Book Club (address: 42 Wigmore Street, London W 1). The Times Book Club can also supply you with books or other papers. If you feel like it you can open an account with them. Or I could authorise you to operate my account with them. I have dealt with them since they began 25 years ago or more. Probably it would be best if you dealt with them independently.

I do not know anything about the Rendezvous of East and West at Ascona. It sounds inviting enough and it would be worthwhile your going. Even if the people are uninteresting, the neighbourhood—the Lago Maggiore and Lugano etc. are enchanting in their beauty. Where mummie will go when she leaves the sanatorium I cannot say. It will be for the doctors to decide. My own feeling is that during winter she ought to be on the hills and in the snows. The crisp and

145. Forbidden.

146. *Vishal Bharat*.



dry Alpine winter is far more beneficial than the gentle summer of the health resorts.

I am alarmed to learn that mummie is described as *Princezzin* (is this spelling you give correct?) in the sanatorium register. This is bad enough anyhow and I dislike it. Apart from my likes and dislikes, it is likely to mean higher charges everywhere. So you had better beware!

I am still in Almora jail in the little tent and outside—the rain, it raineth every day. I know nothing yet about my transfer. Of course you will be informed as soon as this takes place.

Your account of the grasshopper and the angry little bird reminds me of a somewhat similar incident here. Sometime back I caught a huge black centipede. I did not know what to do with it when a myna came and put an end to my mental debate by swallowing it with great relish.

I hope that now that you have got rid of your flu you will soon get quite fit. Has Nanu been in Badenweiler?

What about your sending me a photograph?

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

August 8 Thursday

This diary is much neglected and I seldom write in it. What am I to write? A record of my depressions and unhappiness? Some thoughts one may not put down even in the privacy of a diary. What a coward man is!...<sup>147</sup>

Yesterday Savitri Devi (Mrs. Jafar Ali) was discharged nearly a year before her term was up. She had served nearly 3 years & 3 months out of 5 years. For some months she & I were in this jail but we could not see each other, not even when she lay seriously ill of typhoid.

I have taken to practising writing in Hindi. I write short essays or articles. I am on the whole pleased with my productions. Ideas come off, the pen moves but words are often lacking. I wish I had a better vocabulary.

Vague talk of my transfer from Almora has a somewhat unsettling effect. A year ago today I was in Dehra jail, so also two years ago and three years ago! Last August I was transferred from Dehra to Naini—also the August before in 1933.

147. Personal comments omitted.

August 10 Saturday

Early this morning glancing at some zinnias I was suddenly taken aback by a sight of extraordinary beauty. The dew on a spider's web had made it look like a wonderful pearl necklace, shimmering and full of lustre in the half-light of the dawn. A prisoner was passing by and I felt like sharing my joy with him. I drew his attention to the glistening wonder. He said something stupid which jarred upon me and almost upset me. How necessary it is to have the same emotional background (not to mention intellectual) to have any real mental contact.

The moon is faintly visible today after a long absence. It is the 11th day of the bright fortnight and every night I have searched for it in vain. The clouds covered it. I had almost a sense of resentment at not seeing it day after day, or rather night after night, when the calendar told me that the moon ought to be shining brightly and growing fuller nightly.

August 14, Wednesday

It was रक्षा बन्धन<sup>148</sup> today. I half expected to get राखी<sup>149</sup> from Nan or Betty. Betty sent one to me last year to Dehra jail. None came from them however. But the day was not a blank one for a little note and a rakhi came from Prabha from Wardha. I felt grateful to her for having remembered me.

A letter from Indu & Kamala is long overdue. For the last five days I have waited for it.

Today is the last day of श्रावण.<sup>150</sup> The full moon is presumably visible from some places far from Almora. Here we are enveloped in clouds and only a faint dull light comes through.

Today, or rather tomorrow, I complete eighteen months of my sentence—Another six months—It is a lot of time and I feel a little tired.

Three months ago I made a chart of my various sentences etc. I might as well bring it up to date—so on the next page are some statistics of my jail life.

Total period for which I have been sentenced

at various times from 1921 to 1935

10½ years

Period actually served so far (15-8-35)

5 years

148. Raksha Bandhan.

149. Rakhi.

150. Sravan.



Period served including usual remissions	about 5½ years
Still to serve of present sentence	6 months
Nabha sentence—suspended still?	2½ years
Quashed by court 1922—3 months	
General amnesty 1923—7 months	2 years one month
Premature release 1931—15 months	
and 9½ months in Almora jail to August 15, 1935.	

*August 15, Thursday*

A letter came from Madan from Badenweiler—Bad news of K. She is definitely worse and what is equally bad, she is losing heart. I felt very miserable today. Kamala's child-like face kept dancing before my eyes.

My own grip on life seems to be weakening, if absence of interest in many of my usual activities and mental preoccupations is any test. Perhaps this is a passing phase. But life has a terribly unattractive look about it.

*August 16, 1935<sup>151</sup>*

Letter No. 7

Darling Indu,

There has been no letter from you for nearly three weeks now. Yesterday I had a brief note from Madan Bhai giving me some information about mummie. He said nothing about you, as apparently he expected you to write to me separately and give me all the other news.

It is sad that mummie has not been making good progress lately. I hope the setback was not of long duration and she is pulling up again. These ups and downs are inevitable but nevertheless they annoy and I can quite understand mummie feeling rather fed up occasionally. But she must not lose heart or allow herself to feel depressed. What a long time it is since she was confined to bed! Just a year ago I was with her in Anand Bhawan for eleven short days. That brief period together was ended all too suddenly and ever since we have continued in our respective prisons, and hers is far the narrower and worse one.

I wonder if you have remained at Badenweiler all the while or paid a visit to Bex and Villeneuve and Zurich as you intended to. I have been so much cut off from modern educational developments in Europe that I find it difficult to advise you. Indeed I never knew much about Continental universities. Being myself a product of one of the older

British universities, I am unconsciously partial to them for the simple reason that I know something about them. In my last letter, or was it in the one before? I said that I could not readily imagine your spending several years at Zurich or any other Swiss university. What I meant was that I did not look forward to your education being confined to some such place. My own idea was, and vaguely is, that a period in an English university is desirable from many points of view. To confine oneself to an English university has its drawbacks for it means ignoring almost the non-British viewpoint in life and affairs. That difficulty crops up in another way if you confine yourself to a Swiss or other Continental university. How can we have the best of both? A difficult job.

When you were at Bhowali you will remember that I mentioned the possibility of your going to Oxford sometime or other. At that time I was thinking that after a year or so spent at a Continental university, you might shift to Oxford. I do not believe in people joining universities like Oxford or Cambridge—I do not know much about the Continent—at too early an age. I myself went too early as I was under eighteen at the time. I think 19 or 20 is a better age to join and one can profit more by the opportunities one gets then. As between Oxford and Cambridge I would slightly prefer the former for you. I think it has a better economics school. There is also a well-known place for economics in London—the London School of Economics. Then again I would prefer the life of Oxford to London and, I am sure, so would you.

I had all this background to my thought when I told you not to bother about appearing or even preparing specially for the entrance examination of a Swiss university. This would mean an unnecessary burden for you. You can attend any lectures you choose to without this exam and in particular you should try to improve your knowledge of languages, French, German and, if possible, Russian. There's a stiff year's work for you.

What is to follow? There are so many uncertainties in our life that I am unable to say definitely. But we can and should be prepared for various contingencies. One of these is the possibility of your joining an Oxford college. Probably this will involve also your having to pass some kind of an entrance examination though this is likely to be easier than the Zurich one, even apart from the question of language. Another fact to be remembered is that Oxford colleges do not take an unlimited number of persons. One has therefore to make sure some time ahead. There may be other difficulties, especially for Indians. I think you might



write to Bharati Sarabhai and find out from her what is supposed to be done. She can enquire from her own college people—Somerville College. There are, I believe, only two women's colleges at Oxford and so there is not much choice. Tell Bharati that there is a possibility of your going to Oxford next year—that is October 1936. Till then you are likely to remain on the Continent learning languages and odd subjects. Will it be possible for you to join Somerville College then? And if so, on what conditions of passing examination etc. Tell her that you have passed the Bombay matriculation and then spent a year at Santiniketan and now intend spending a year at Zurich. All this will not let you off the Oxford entrance—Responsions I think it is called. If you had gone in for the Cambridge Senior you might have got off Responsions.

Find all this out from Bharati and if it is possible ask her to get your name provisionally entered at Somerville for next year. This will not bind you in any way. Also find out details about the entrance exam etc. so that you may know what it is like. You might inform Bharati also that you propose to take up economics and allied subjects.

I do not know where Bharati is likely to be now for it is vacation time at Oxford. For aught I know she might be in India with her parents. Anyway she is likely to return to Oxford next month for the new term which begins early in October. If you address your letter to Somerville College, Oxford, it will find her.

Having dealt with the important subject of your education, I must now come back to my usual topic—jail gossip. What am I to do? The range of my subjects is limited here and so I seek to interest you in my birds and flowers. Or at any rate I try to find an excuse in them for writing to you. Morning and evening a crowd of birds—they are mostly mynas and sparrows—sit in front of my little tent waiting for their food. If there is delay in supplying it they make their presence and their impatience obvious enough by their noises. I share my morning *dallia* with them and bread crumbs of course. The sparrows and I are old friends for we shared the barrack building for many months. Thirty or forty of them lived in the old roof and when this roof was taken down there were some tragedies. But fortunately most of them escaped and now I find that they have made themselves at home under the eaves of the new roof. Some of them have become greatly daring. They come quite near to me and even enter my tent. Then there are swallows and bulbuls and other birds that I do not know. The other day a new visitor—a charming little creature—came and sat down within 3 or 4 feet of me as I sat reading in the tent and had a good look at me. I do not know if I was approved or not. I gazed at it fascinated



and delighted and when it flew away to another part of my yard I followed at a respectful distance. I did not know its name and no one could tell it to me. And then it flew right away and has not returned again.

I am afraid my companions here are not exactly noted for bird-lore. Some time back I wanted to find out the name of a strange bird. I asked a warder—for warders are my constant companions—if he could recognise birds and knew their names. 'Well,' he replied after some hesitation, 'कौआँ को हम पहचानते हैं !'<sup>152</sup>

There was a swift tragedy two days ago. I was standing some distance away from my tent, looking away. Suddenly there was a noise in front of the tent. There was a whirr and a squeak—and that was the end of the story. A hawk had swooped down and seized and carried away a bird. It was done so swiftly that I could not even see what kind of bird it had got or do anything else in the matter. The story had ended, but the aftermath continued for long, for the other birds sat in rows on the barrack roofs and walls, terrified at this strange fate and croaking out their warning cry.

I saw another sight—this was last year in Dehra jail—which surprised me. A crow came down into my yard and carried off with ease quite a decent sized frog. It was all done very smartly as if the old villain had practised at the job. He came down, tipped the frog over on his back, so as to prevent him hopping away, and then seized him by a leg and flew away.

You write to me of the pines that surround you in Badenweiler and of the delicious pine smell. There are pines enough round about here too, as you know, but the smell is not so marked. Or it may be that I have got used to it. For the last month or so I have been living on top of pine-needles. A thick layer of them has been spread in my tent to prevent the damp from creeping up. These needles give a faint but pleasant smell. You must have a variety of pines and firs in the Black Forest. Have you got the monkey-puzzle tree anywhere about there? I like this tree and its name always amuses me. It is hardly native to those parts but I remember seeing it on the promenade at Montreux.

A few days ago I had a curious experience. I was looking at my zinnias early in the morning when I was taken aback and I almost gasped at a sight of extraordinary beauty. It was just a spider's web with the dew-drops hanging on to it but in that half-light of the dawn it seemed like a wonderful pearl necklace, shimmering and full of lustre. Why

152. We do recognize the crows.



do I compare it with a pearl necklace? It was far more beautiful. I gazed at it much moved, and then after a while I felt like sharing my emotion with a prisoner who was passing by. I drew his attention to the glistening wonder. He said something excessively stupid and banal which jarred upon me and almost upset me. The magic moment passed and I came down from the heavens and bumped on the too solid earth.

I felt irritated at my companion's blindness and indifference. Yet it was no fault of his. What chance had he had, poor fellow, to develop his artistic and aesthetic self? For generations he and his kind had been crushed, sat upon, till the light had gone out of their eyes and on their faces had come the "emptiness of ages". And I thought that for any real understanding or contact with another how essential it was that there should be not only a similar intellectual but an emotional background. Individuals and nations grow up with different backgrounds and then fail to understand each other.

To come back to earthy topics. I hope you are keeping physically fit now. You swim and walk and both of these exercises are excellent. I imagine that swimming is probably the best all-round exercise; it tones up every part of the body. But only if you swim enough. In small swimming pools little real swimming is possible and one is apt to laze more than swim. Apart from these open air exercises, I wish you would keep up some of the *asans*, especially the *shirshasana* and the *sarvangasana*. I am a great believer in both of these. They are good for the back, the shoulders, the head and the eyes. The back is really very important, and a really strong and at the same time supple back is not only good for health but helps in a graceful carriage. Swimming is good for this. But it is not always possible to get a swim. If you practise these two *asans* and a few bending and stretching exercises daily for say 10 minutes, you will feel delightfully supple and fit. Your back is not strong enough physically, though metaphorically you may have a stiff backbone. At your age it should be very easy to get absolutely supple but if you are not careful a gradual stiffness creeps on as one grows older.

I do not want you to overdo these indoor exercises. Spend as little time over them as you like but try to give a few minutes daily. Remember not to strain or tire yourself in the least, and this applies very specially to the *asans*. The point is to do them, not to overdo them. The test of any exercise is that you should feel fresh and energetic afterwards. If you feel tired there is something wrong with you or the exercise, or you are overdoing it. Begin with only half a minute of the *shirshasana* and see how you feel. Apart from all this try to keep up your swimming. If you have the chance go in for lawn tennis.

A line at the end of Madan's letter informs me that my two old letters which had gone astray have reached you. He does not mention if my 5th letter dated 20th July reached. I presume it did.

When you write to me ask mummie to dictate to you a line or two to me—write them down in Hindi—this will cheer me and it might also cheer her.

Let me know what periodicals you are getting from India and London.

Love from

Your loving  
Papua

*August 25 Sunday*

Yesterday, after long waiting—almost a month—I received a letter from Indu. It came from Locarno. She had gone from Badenweiler to Bex and then to Ascona. I was soothed by the letter and felt happier than I had done for many days.

No further news of Kamala.

Three days ago as I was digging to prepare the ground for some flower seedlings, I came across a stone. Nothing unusual as stones abound here. But all my efforts to move that stone proved unavailing. It wouldn't budge. I dug more and more and eventually an enormous piece of rock, about 6 feet in height and at least 20 maunds in weight, was disclosed. It was a problem what to do with it. Eventually I decided to have it stood up on end, emerging from the ground as a kind of monument. This was a difficult enough matter and it took a dozen men or more and much shouting to get it heaved up to position. There it is now, looking rather distinguished and elemental and there it is likely to remain for a very long time unless the jail authorities interfere. I hope to plant flowering shrubs round it. But the flowers and plants will wither and fade, the stone will remain—a monument to my long stay in this prison. I am quite fascinated by it and I gaze at its fine outline from various angles.

I read in the papers about the disgraceful squabbles for office in the Lucknow Reception Committee<sup>153</sup> for the next Congress. Not being able to agree on any other name they elected me chairman—a transparent and stupid device to hide their disagreements. But immediately after, they quarrelled over the general secretaryship. Disgusting! I dislike intensely being exploited by others in this or any other way.

153. The election for the general secretaryship had to be invalidated because of violent behaviour.



Absurd to elect me as chairman when I am not likely to be released till the eve of the Congress. Indeed this election makes it practically certain that govt. will not release me till the last possible moment.

I am also suggested for the Congress presidency.<sup>154</sup> How I can be elected in my home province, unless the constitution has been changed, I do not know. That apart, I should hate to be pitchforked into the presidentship soon after release. I must have a few months to make my soundings, to find out if I fit in with what is happening. My present feeling is that I do not fit in with anybody or almost anything in India. And then I want to go to Europe to K.

How extraordinarily poor we are at present in outstanding persons! The only two other names suggested so far for the presidentship are: Rajagopalachari and Bhulabhai Desai.

*August 28, Wednesday*

A cable from Madan (*via* Allahabad) today that K's condition unsatisfactory—nausea and vomiting. I felt thoroughly upset and the bad news seemed as if it was a prelude to something worse. She is slipping away and the thought of it is unbearable, hellish. Last year the month of September was a damnable month for me. Again September is coming.

*August 30, 1935<sup>155</sup>*

Letter No. 8

Darling Indu,

So at last your letter came to me, a month after the one that preceded it, a fortnight after it was due. You began it in style on August 1st but it took you two weeks to finish it and it was not posted till the 15th August at Locarno. I did not even know, till your letter came, that you were travelling or else I would have made allowances for the delay. Madan Bhai had written to me but he had not mentioned that you were away.

I am glad you have visited Bex and met Mlle. Hemmerlin. I have only met her on three or four brief occasions but she has always struck me as a very fine woman. You will have many friends in Europe and

154. *The Tribune* of 25 August 1935 reported that the provincial Congress leaders who had assembled at Lucknow favoured Jawaharlal for the presidentship.

155. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

you will never lack for advice and help. But somehow what comforts me most is the presence of Mlle. H.

I do not know yet if you have come to any decision about your future studies. Probably you are back now in Badenweiler after your jaunt: Bex-Ascona-Zurich, and have met the people you wished to consult. I am still inclined to think that you should concentrate on languages during the next year and not bother yourself about the entrance exam of Zurich or elsewhere. European and for the matter of that world conditions are peculiarly unstable at present and it is impossible to tell what the near future holds. It is quite possible that you may find it undesirable or impracticable later on to stick to a Continental university. The labour involved in an entrance exam would then be largely, or at least partly, wasted. But a knowledge of languages acquired will always be a gain. Of course the two cannot be separated. In any event you have to spend the next year on the Continent and the choice seems to be confined to Zurich or Lausanne. Zurich is probably the more advanced university centre but for the present and for my purpose, as suggested above, it does not matter much which you prefer. It is the choice between a German-language background and a French-language one. Fix up whichever you fancy.

In my last letter, I think, I suggested your writing to Bharati about the Oxford college. Later on I found from your letter that she was in India for her holidays. I suppose she will be going back soon for term begins at Oxford early in October. Zurich and Lausanne are all very well in their own way but they are, after all, rather narrow places with a limited outlook. For a wider world outlook, Paris, Oxford or some of the American universities are better. I rule out Berlin for the present. You might therefore write to Bharati anyhow and get all the facts. Later on, if we consider necessary, we can take a more formal step.

The papers are full of war rumours. For the time being there is talk of an Italo-Abyssinian war and it is possible that the next two or three weeks might see the beginning of this. I don't think there is any immediate danger of war in Europe. But one can never be certain and, in any event, war in east Africa will produce a continuing crisis in Europe. This will inevitably affect almost all activities there and foreigners, whether they are students or not, cannot escape this. Mummie's treatment may be affected, so also your educational course. The plan you may carefully lay down now may have to be altered materially then. So you must all keep wide awake and not be caught in any of the little difficulties that crop up during times of crisis. If such a crisis arises you and Madan Bhai had better consult the



American Express people and Thomas Cook about money transfer etc. It is possible that our correspondence may also be affected, though I imagine that air services will continue.

I have made arrangements from time to time for various newspapers and magazines to be sent to mummie from India and England. But not a mention of them is made in your letter. I am intrigued. Are you not receiving them? In the event of your leaving mummie to go to Zurich or Lausanne you might arrange that a weekly packet of these papers is sent to you from Badenweiler after mummie and Madan Bhai have seen them. You can choose the papers you want. Perhaps others—Indian students there—might also be interested in the Indian papers. They are rare enough on the Continent and you could arrange to send them on to some students' centre. It would be a pity to throw these papers away when others would welcome them.

I am rather vague about the purpose of your visit to Ascona, although the desire to visit a beautiful place is purpose enough. Still I have an idea that you mentioned some kind of a reunion of East and West. What this is I do not know and I await your next letter to find out all about it, and whom you found there.

It is sad that mummie is not making as good progress as she ought and odd complications are turning up. I was hoping that by this time she would be up and about, and looking forward to an autumn and winter in Suisse to set her up. But it appears that she must stay on in Badenweiler for the present and till she gets better. It is a pity that Mrs. Geissler has left her. If the new arrangement at Badenweiler is satisfactory well and good, but later on some other arrangement will be necessary. I do feel so helpless sitting here, all enclosed, in the mountains, unable to be of much use to you or to mummie or to anyone else. Dolamma, it appears, is again unwell and her blood pressure has gone up.

You were quite right in not getting mummie involved in the proposed home for Indian convalescents in Berlin. It is best to keep at a safe distance from all public activities in Germany. Mummie is there for her treatment and for nothing else. Mrs. Goering,<sup>156</sup> as of course you know, is one of the big women of the Third Reich. I read about her marriage some months back. Was she not an opera singer?

Dhan Gopal Mukerji's New York address is 325 East 72nd Street, New York City. In summer he lives in a cottage elsewhere but I

156. Wife of Herman Wilhelm Goering, the German Nazi leader.



suppose he will be back in N.Y. soon, if he has not gone over to Europe as you suggest, on the strength of Mlle. Hemmerlin.

This address reminds me of your address. This is going to continue, so far as I am concerned, to be Badenweiler until I am definitely told to write elsewhere.

Some days back I had a card from Ratan and Rajan<sup>157</sup> from somewhere in the Arctic Circle—latitude 80.10° it said, and you can look up in an atlas to find out how far from the North Pole this is. They had been to Iceland and Spitzbergen on a pleasure cruise and they wrote, facing the great ice barrier and with the midnight sun shining down upon them, or rather sideways, for the midnight sun is just over the horizon. The picture card of a semi-frozen sea brought a sense of nostalgia to me. It reminded me of my own visit to Norway just twenty five years ago. I had just taken my degree at Cambridge and I went with a friend on a modest trip to the Norwegian fjords. I did not go nearly as far as Ratan and Rajan but I loved those fjords and the blue ice coming right down to the sea. And though I did not see the midnight sun, I saw it set at 11.30 p.m. and pop out again an hour or so later. I made up my mind to return soon and do the grand trip to Spitzbergen, that is, as far as ordinary travellers can go. Beyond that is the preserve of Arctic explorers. But this ambition and desire of my heart, like so many others, remains unfulfilled. I am far enough from the Arctic seas in point of space, I am even further away if opportunity to visit them is a criterion. Ratan writes: 'You must do this wonderful trip before you resume work.' 'Must', indeed! How I would love to go there with mummie and you and sail those silent and unruffled waters of the fjords, winding in and out between the high mountains, every turn bringing a new surprise. Indeed I would like to go further north still; it will be cold there of course with chunks of ice floating about in the sea, and icebergs, but the sun puts in a double shift of work and shines away night and day.

The Arctic regions have attracted me ever since I was a kid and read Fridtjof Nansen's<sup>158</sup> *Farthest North*—the Pole had still to be reached then. The polar regions and the Himalayan glaciers, these have beckoned to me for long years past. How many plans I have made to wander about in Ladakh and Skardo and Baltistan and Central Asia, and pass on to Tibet, to visit Manasarovar and Kailas! But so far my nearest approach to Kailas and Manasarovar is Almora jail—for

157. Rajan Nehru; daughter of K. N. Haksar and wife of R. K. Nehru.

158. (1861-1930); Norwegian explorer, scientist and statesman. *Farthest North*, an account of his journey across Greenland on skis in 1888, appeared in English translation in 1897.



the pilgrim route passes through Almora and it is a bare three weeks' journey from here to that wonderful lake.

The rains continue here but they are less frequent and when the sun comes out it is very hot. But the nights are cool and there is often a bite in the air in the early mornings. The weather is slowly changing with autumn, but of course the rainy season does not allow the real autumn to develop till October. Meanwhile I live in my tent and watch my flowers and feed my birds. The other day as I was digging with the intention of making a new flower plot, I came up against a stone. It was no ordinary stone and I dug, and others dug, and we all dug, and the more we dug the bigger appeared the stone. At last we uncovered it; it was a hefty affair about six feet in length and broad and strong. With the help of numerous men, it was made to stand up on one end and then nearly half of it was covered up with the loose earth. The rest stands out of the ground now, a worthy sight with graceful curves and jagged corners, an embodiment of quiet strength. I hope it will remain there for many a long day, a reminder of my long stay in this jail! It is over ten months now since I came here! What a long time it has been, especially since you people sailed away from Bombay to the far west and my fortnightly visits to Bhowali ended.

Some of my friends, the birds, are sitting or standing near me as I write trying to draw my attention to the fact that it is time I fed them. It is the new generation and it has not been properly trained. I am afraid I am partly responsible for their bad habits, for they want to be fed at odd hours and I humour them.

Some of the phrases in your last letter amused me. They bear evidence of your German or French background, and the 'wills' and 'shalls' get rather mixed up. It is a small matter and is bound to happen when one changes over from one language to another. *Chhoti puphi*, you tell me, was 'fed up of the rain.'

I learned about Romain Rolland's marriage to his secretary some time ago. Rather late in the day for a marriage, I should have thought, but the parties concerned are the best judges. I have just been reading one of his later books in translation. He writes beautifully. I have now sent for some more of his books in the original French from the Times Book Club, London.

I hope you gave my love to Mont Blanc and the Deuts du Midi, and Lac Lemman and our many friends in that part of the world.

*Puphi* has sent me, at my request, an enlargement of the snap of you that Raja took at Bhowali. It is quite good.

I have also got a copy of the photograph someone took of Bapu and you in Bombay. You are grinning in it and the picture is good. Bapu has his back to the camera.

I wish you would let me know if the books I have sent to mummie have reached her. Also the cable I sent on July 31st. I like to be definite about these matters. Uncertainty is not a pleasant sensation.

Love,

Your loving  
Papu

*September 2, Monday*

I was just getting down again after the emotional upheaval. A letter came from Madan which, though disturbing, at least assured me that there was no immediate danger.

This morning came the thunderbolt—a cable from Dr. Steffan of the Badenweiler sanatorium saying that Kamala's condition was critical and that he had wired to the India Office and the Viceroy, urging my release. So this is the end.

I felt broken up all day—and then realising that whether I am released or not I am sure to be transferred from here, I tried to occupy myself with arranging my books and papers.

This evening at about 8 p.m. D. Vira,<sup>159</sup> the joint magistrate, came to me with the following message from the Chief Secretary, U.P.

In view of news received from doctor in Germany of the serious illness of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's wife, the Governor-General in Council have decided to allow Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru to proceed at once to Germany to enable him to join his wife, and for this purpose have suspended his sentence under section 401 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

I gave Vira a note<sup>160</sup> in reply which he has now gone to telephone to the Chief Sec. He will come back to give me his reply. In my note I made it clear that I certainly intended going to Germany at the earliest possible moment but for the rest I bound myself down to nothing—of course they could arrest me on my return if they chose.

So perhaps this is my last night in jail! In a day and a half I may be in Allahabad. Within ten days in Badenweiler! How will I find Kamala? Or will I see her at all?...

159. (b. 1906); joint magistrate, Almora, 1934-36; ambassador to Czechoslovakia, 1954-56; cabinet secretary, 1964-66; Governor of Haryana, 1966-67; Governor of Bengal, 1967-69; Governor of Mysore, 1969-70.

160. See following item.



2-9-35<sup>161</sup>

## TO THE CHIEF SECRETARY

I have just received a message to the effect that in view of the serious illness of my wife in Germany my sentence has been suspended under sec. 401 of the Cr. P. Code by the Governor-General in Council to enable me to proceed at once to Germany. I do not know what this section of the Cr. P. Code is and I have no means of referring to it here. I am told, however, that this message means my having to go back to prison in the event of my returning to India before the time fixed for the expiry of my sentence, that is, February 1936, and till that date.

I appreciate the courtesy of government in thus permitting me to go to my wife and also in informing me that in the event of my early return I shall have to go back to prison. But I should like to make it clear, if I may, that the second part of this proposal has nothing to do with my willingness or otherwise. I certainly want to go to Germany as soon as possible and I shall return in the ordinary course when I am not wanted there. If on my return government choose to arrest me and send me back to prison, they do not require my permission to do so.

I understand that on my discharge there will be no restrictions on me either in India, during the few days before I go off by air, or abroad. I presume also that I can travel if necessary to the usual western and central European countries, i.e., Germany, Switzerland, France, Austria, Italy, Czechoslovakia, England etc. This may be necessitated by my wife's treatment, or on account of my daughter who is studying in Switzerland, or otherwise.

I have already a passport which is valid till April 1936. I should be informed if this can be used by me or whether a new one will be issued.

2/9/35

9 p.m. D. Vira came back and told me that the Chief Sec. is referring the question of sentence, as well as restrictions in India, to the Governor. The reply will come tomorrow. In Europe, I am told, I can go where I like on my old passport and there are no restrictions. Here, before I go off, govt. would not like me to indulge in public political activity—hold forth at meetings etc.—but they do not want to lay it down in

writing. More or less they want to leave it to my good taste—a kind of gentleman's agreement.

The question of sentence arises thus—will I have to serve the balance of my sentence whenever I might come back, or only the part up to February 15 if I return earlier. Vira had insisted that the latter was meant, but evidently Chief Sec. was not clear about this.

STATEMENT TO THE PRESS<sup>162</sup>

.... I do not remember the wording of this section but in any event it seemed that in view of the decision of the Governor-General in Council my imprisonment has automatically terminated for the present at least. I was further told that there were no conditions or restrictions but in the event of my returning to India before the date on which my sentence would have expired in the ordinary course, that is, February 1936, I would have to return to prison. I expressed my appreciation for the courtesy extended to me by government but several matters seemed to me to require elucidation and in order to avoid all chance of misunderstanding I made certain enquiries. In answer to these enquiries I was given the following message at about midday of September 3:

- 1) In any event, that is, if I returned earlier than February, 1936, imprisonment would not go beyond February next year.
- 2) In Europe there would be no restrictions on travel.
- 3) As regards the few days intervening between the date of my release and the date of my departure from India by air there would be no restrictions on me. But the Governor-General in Council trusted to my honour not to make any political speeches during this period.

I left Almora jail within half an hour of this message and came direct to Allahabad.

I might add that the burden on my honour is not a heavy one. After over nineteen months of seclusion it would be extraordinary vanity and folly on my part to rush suddenly to the platform and presume to give advice on public questions to my colleagues or others. Even if I had been released in the ordinary course after completing my sentence, I would have taken some time to adjust myself to the new conditions and to acquaint myself with all that has happened during the period of my seclusion, important and of vast consequence

162. 3 September 1935. *The Hindu*, 4 September 1935.



as much of this has been. It would have been an impertinence on my part and unfair both to myself and to my colleagues, to come to any decision without the fullest consultation with them. My sudden and unexpected release makes it even harder for me to make the necessary adjustment, and the immediate cause of my release is such as to fill my mind with anxiety to the exclusion of much else. It is my intention to proceed to Europe by air as soon as arrangements can be made and to join my wife there.

#### WHY I WENT TO PRISON<sup>163</sup>

Why did I go to prison the last time? Why, of course, because a magistrate of high degree sentenced me to two years imprisonment! That was an all-sufficient reason and I have no doubt that the magistrate felt convinced that he had to convict me of sedition and sentence me to a long term. I believe he was rather sorry for me and did not look forward to the prospect of sending me to prison for a long term so soon after my discharge on a previous two years term. I felt grateful to him for his attitude but, being where he was, he had no choice in the matter. I would not presume to argue with him the legal implications of my conduct and of what I had said. My knowledge of the law has grown rusty and he was presumably an expert in it. Indeed the vague memories of my legal days convinced me long ago that it is no easy matter to escape the widespread tentacles of the Indian law of sedition. And I had no desire to do so and by my statement in court I endeavoured to make the path of the law as smooth as possible.

I was sentenced for sedition, not for civil disobedience as such. Sir Samuel Hoare and other high-placed authorities quite rightly laid stress on this. Civil disobedience was at the time still in theory, though little enough in practice, the Congress programme; but I had consciously avoided indulgence in it during my brief stay outside. I did not thus court imprisonment in the old-style Congress way; I had no particular desire to rush back to prison. I did not go as one of an army marching in step, but as an individual, one of the numerous odds and ends who are continually being picked up and deprived of liberty for long or short periods.

I had been convicted previously on many and varied counts, sedition included. There was the first conviction of distributing handbills advocating a hartal, and then for criminal intimidation and extortion

163. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. This incomplete note was presumably written after his release.

(fear some charge—they related to picketing foreign cloth shops), and for not disappearing into thin air when ordered to do so (this was in Nabha where I was told to disappear when there was no obvious means of doing so at hand), and conspiracy (I forget what this conspiracy was about, this was also in Nabha), and breach of the Salt Act, and later a multitude of ordinances, and non-compliance with an order interning me in Allahabad. Right through these charges ran the stout wire of sedition, sometimes in the background, sometimes as a separate and additional charge. I had survived these various charges and convictions, though the suspended Nabha sentences sometimes make me wonder if I have them still in store for me. I had thus a black enough record when I appeared before the Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta.

I was not hungering for prison and yet I was in a curious state of mind and prison seemed inevitable. It hung like a black cloud over me ready to envelop me at any moment...

## BOOKS READ IN PRISON

### PRESIDENCY JAIL—CALCUTTA

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| 1. Lion Feuchtwanger: <i>The Oppermanns</i> | 15/2/34 |
| 2. J.B. Priestley: <i>Wonder Hero</i>       | 16/2    |

### ALIPORE CENTRAL JAIL—CALCUTTA

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| 3. G.K. Chesterton: <i>The Everlasting Man</i>                                 | 18/2 |
| 4. J. Conrad: <i>Lord Jim</i> (Jail Library)                                   | 21/2 |
| 5. E.P. Oppenheim: <i>The Mystery of Mr. Bernard Brown</i> (Jail Library)      | 22/2 |
| 6. Sir James Jeans: <i>The New Background of Science</i> (1933)                | 23/2 |
| 7. John Strachey: <i>The Menace of Fascism</i> (1933)                          | 24/2 |
| 8. Michael Arlen: <i>Piracy</i> (J.L.)   | 2/3  |
| 9. Henri Barbusse: <i>Inferno</i>  | 3/3  |
| 10. G.D.H. Cole: <i>The Intelligent Man's Guide Through World Chaos</i> (1933) | 4/3  |
| 11. Mark Twain: <i>The Prince &amp; the Pauper</i> (J.L.)                      | 5/3  |
| 12. P.G. Wodehouse: <i>Money for Nothing</i> (J.L.)                            | 8/3  |
| 13. Cole: <i>The Intelligent Man's Review of Europe Today</i>                  | 9/3  |



14. *What Would be the Character of a New War?* various authors—League of Nations (Gollancz) 12/3
15. Joseph Conrad: *Typhoon & Other Stories* (J.L.) 13/3
16. Andre Siegfried: *La Crise Britannique au XX Siecle* 14/3

Second Month

17. W. Trotter: *Instincts of the Herd in Peace & War* 16/3
18. A. Conan Doyle: *The Land of Mist* (J.L.) 17/3
19. Arnold Bennett: *A Great Man* (J.L.) 18/3
20. Douglas Christie: *Terry of Tangistan* (J.L.) 19/3
21. Stephen Leacock: *Over the Footlights & Other Fancies* (J.L.) 22/3
22. Hans Kohn: *A History of Nationalism in the East* 26/3
23. R.D. Charques & A.H. Ewen: *Profits & Politics in the Post War World* 3/4
24. Leo Tolstoy: *War & Peace* 4/4
25. Stephen Leacock: *Some Nonsense Novels* (J.L.) 4/4
26. Ella Winter: *Red Virtue* 6/4
27. Winston Churchill: *Thoughts & Adventures* 8/4
28. P.G. Wodehouse: *Meet Mr. Mulliner* (J.L.) 9/4
29. Vicente Blasco Ibanez: *The Intruder* 10/4
30. Romain Rolland: *Life of Ram Krishna* 10/4
31. E.B. Havell: *Ancient & Medieval Architecture of India* 12/4
32. F.W. Champion: *The Jungle in Sunlight & Shadow* 13/4
33. Mukul Chandra Dey: *My Pilgrimages to Ajanta & Bagh* 14/4
34. Bertram Thomas: *Arabia Felix* 15/4

Third Month (16/4—15/5)

35. Capt. G.V. Modak: *Indian Defence Problem* 16/4
36. H.G. Wells: *The Shape of Things to Come* 19/4
37. Upton Sinclair: *The Book of Life* 21/4
38. Casanova: *Life & Adventures* 24/4
39. Bernard Shaw: *Too True to be Good; Village Wooing; On the Rocks* 24/4
40. Ivan Bunin: *The Gentleman from San Francisco & Other Stories* 24/4
41. Y.Z.: *From Moscow to Samarkand* 25/4/3<sup>c</sup>
42. Parmenas Githendu Mockerie: *An African Speaks for His People* 26/4
43. Eleanor F. Rathbone: *Child Marriage; The Indian Minotaur* 28/4
44. Samuel Butler: *The Way of All Flesh* 30/4

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|-----|--|------|
| 45. | Buschke & Jacobsohn: <i>Sex Habits</i>   | 30/4 |
| 46. | <i>Famous Plays of 1932</i>  | 1/5  |
| 47. | Peter Quennell: <i>A Superficial Journey Through Tokyo &amp; Peking</i>                            | 3/5  |
| 48. | I. Babel: <i>Red Cavalry</i>   | 4/5  |
| 49. | Gurumukh Nihal Singh: <i>Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development 1600-1919</i> |      |
| 50. | Ralph Fox: <i>Colonial Policy of British Imperialism</i>   | 7/5  |

EN ROUTE A.C.J. TO D.D.J.

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|-----|---|-----|
| 51. | Gorki: <i>On Guard for the Soviet Union</i> | 8/5 |
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DEHRA DUN DISTRICT JAIL.

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|-----|---|------|
| 52. | Chowdhry Mukhtar Singh: <i>Rural India</i>                | 12/5 |
| 53. | S. Radhakrishnan: <i>The Philosophy of the Upanishads</i> | 12/5 |

Fourth Month (16/5—16/6)

- |     |  |      |
|-----|--|------|
| 54. | Courthope's <i>History of English Poetry</i> , Vols. I, II & III                 | 20/5 |
| 55. | Kalhana's <i>Rajatarangini</i> —Ranjit's translation<br><i>Tarangas I to VII</i> | 21/5 |
| 56. | Courthope's <i>History of English Poetry</i> , Vols. IV, V, VI                   | 25/5 |
| 57. | J.C. Winslow & Verrier Elwin: <i>The Dawn of Indian Freedom</i>                  | 26/5 |
| 58. | J.S. Barnes: <i>Fascism</i>  | 28/5 |
| 59. | Walter Pater: <i>Marius the Epicurean</i>  | 28/5 |
| 60. | Maurice Hindus: <i>Red Bread</i>   | 30/5 |
| 61. | Joseph Husslein: <i>The Christian Social Manifesto</i>                           | 31/5 |
| 62. | Ernst Toller: <i>I was a German</i>  | 31/5 |
| 63. | C.R. Haines: <i>Fragments from Sappho etc.</i>                                   | 1/6  |
| 64. | Sean O'Faolain: <i>Midsummer Night Madness</i>                                   | 3/6  |
| 65. | Brown Book of the Hitler Terror  | 8/6  |
| 66. | Maxim Gorki: <i>My University Days</i>   | 10/6 |

Fifth Month (16/6—15/7)

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|-----|---|------|
| 67. | Sean O'Faolain: <i>A Nest of Simple Folk</i>                                      | 18/6 |
| 68. | Julius F. Hecker: <i>Moscow Dialogues</i>   | 23/6 |
| 69. | Kalhana's <i>Rajatarangini</i> (Ranjit's translation)<br><i>Taranga VIII etc.</i> | 27/6 |



70. *India Analysed*, Vol. I 28/6  
 71. H.G. Wells: *The Work, Wealth & Happiness of Mankind* 4/7  
 72. Brian O'Neill: *The War for the Land in Ireland* 6/7  
 73. Sidney Hook: *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* 9/7  
 74. Ralph Fox: *Lenin* 13/7

## Sixth Month (16/7—15/8)

75. Aldous Huxley: *Beyond the Mexique Bay* 16/7  
 76. Ernst Toller: *The Blind Goddess* 16/7  
 77. Lewis E. Lawes: *Twenty Thousand Years in Sing Sing* 17/7  
 78. J.F. Horrabin: *Atlas of Current Affairs* 18/7  
 79. Oswald Spengler: *The Hour of Decision* 21/7  
 80. *My Best Thriller*: An anthology 24/7  
 81. *Finished*: Otto's German Conversation, Grammar 25/7  
 82. H.N. Brailsford: *Property or Peace* 26/7  
 83. Gerald Heard: *These Hurrying Years* 28/7  
 84. Ernst Henri: *Hitler Over Europe?* 5/8  
 85. L. Cranmer-Byng: *The Vision of Asia* 10/8

Transferred from Dehra Jail—11/8/34

Out of prison—12/8 to 23/8

In Naini Central Prison—23/8/34

## Seventh Month

86. Karel Capek: *President Masaryk Tells His Story* 27/8  
 87. Erich Maria Remarque: *The Road Back* 30/8  
 88. G.D.H. Cole: *What Marx Really Meant* 31/8  
 89. Karl Marx: *Selected Essays*—Translated by H.J. Stenning 5/9

## Eighth Month 16/9—15/10

90. Gerald Heard: *Social Substance of Religion* 18/9  
 91. M.K. Gandhi: *Self-Restraint vs Self-Indulgence* 20/9  
 92. C.K. Ogden: *Basic English* 21/9  
 93. Edited by F.H. Pritchard: *Great Essays of all Nations* 22/9  
 94. *International Literature* No. 5 1933-34 22/9/34  
 95. *Duranty Reports Russia* 28/9  
 96. Goad & Currey: *The Working of a Corporate State* 29/9  
 97. Balzac: *Catherine de' Medici* 7/10  
 98. Lewis Carroll: *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (J.L.) 9/10  
 99. Bukharin: *Imperialism & World Economy* 10/10

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|------|--|-------|
| 100. | P.G. Wodehouse: <i>Something Fresh</i> (J.L.)                          | 10/10 |
| 101. | C.K. Ogden: <i>Debabelization</i>                                      | 12/10 |
| 102. | B.D. Basu: <i>Consolidation of the Christian Power in India</i> (J.L.) | 15/10 |

Ninth Month

- |      |   |       |
|------|---|-------|
| 103. | P.G. Wodehouse: <i>Short Stories</i> (J.L.)           | 16/10 |
| 104. | Thomas Paine: <i>Rights of Man</i> (J.L.)             | 10/10 |
| 105. | Mark Twain: <i>Innocents Abroad</i> (J.L.)            | 24/10 |
| 106. | Prescott: <i>Conquest of Peru</i> (unfinished) (J.L.) | 26/10 |

ALMORA DISTRICT JAIL

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|------|---|---------|
| 107. | Leonard Woolf: <i>Empire &amp; Commerce in Africa</i> | 1/11/34 |
|------|---|---------|

Tenth Month

- |      |   |       |
|------|---|-------|
| 108. | C.K. Ogden & I.A. Richards: <i>The Meaning of Meaning</i> | 19/11 |
| 109. | Balzac: <i>Lost Illusions</i> etc.                        | 20/11 |
| 110. | W. Somerset Maugham: <i>Ah King!</i>                      | 20/11 |
| 111. | V. Dandre: <i>Anna Pavlova</i>                            | 22/11 |
| 112. | Zur Muhlen: <i>The Wheel of Life</i>                      | 22/11 |
| 113. | <i>Famous Plays of 1933-34</i>                            |       |
|      | 1. <i>Clive of India</i> by W.P. Lipscomb & R.J. Minne,   |       |
|      | 2. <i>The Wind &amp; The Rain</i> by Merton Hodge         |       |
|      | 3. <i>Reunion in Vienna</i> by Robert E. Sherwood         |       |
|      | 4. <i>The Laughing Woman</i> by Gordon Daviot             | 28/11 |
|      | 5. <i>Sixteen</i> by Aimee & Philip Stuart                |       |
|      | 6. <i>The Distaff Side</i> by John Van Druten             |       |
| 114. | <i>India Analysed—Vol. III</i>                            | 4/12  |
| 115. | Hans Fallada: <i>Little Man What Now?</i>                 | 5/12  |
| 116. | S. Tretiakov: <i>Chinese Testament</i>                    | 8/12  |
| 117. | C.F. Andrews: <i>The Zanzibar Crisis</i> (pamphlet)       | 12/12 |

Eleventh Month 16/12/34—15/1/35

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|------|--|-------|
| 118. | John Dos Passos: <i>In All Countries</i>     | 22/12 |
| 119. | Glorney Bolton: <i>The Tragedy of Gandhi</i> | 24/12 |
| 120. | Wells etc. <i>The Science of Life</i>        | 26/12 |
| 121. | Sherwood Eddy: <i>Russia Today</i>           | 30/12 |

1935

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|------|---|--------|
| 122. | Compton Mackenzie: <i>Extremes Meet</i> | 3/1/35 |
| 123. | Agnes Smedley: <i>Chinese Destinies</i> | 4/1    |



124. Andre Malraux: *Man's Fate* 6/1  
 125. *Famous Plays of 1934:*  
     1. *Touch Wood* by C.L. Anthony  
     2. *Men in White* by Sidney Kingsley  
     3. *The Maitlands* by Ronald Mackenzie  
     4. *Queen of Scots* by Gordon Daviot 8/1  
     5. *The Old Folks at Home* by H.M. Harwood  
     6. *Family Affairs* by Gertrude Jennings  
 126. Dennis Wheatley: *The Forbidden Territory* 8/1  
 127. H.G. Wells: *Autobiography* Vol. I 14/1

Twelfth Month

128. Victor A. Yakhontoff: *The Chinese Soviets* 18/1/35  
 129. H.G. Wells: *Autobiography*, Vol. II 22/1/35  
 130. Somerset Maugham: *Ashenden* 27/1/35  
 131. Thornton Wilder: *Heaven's My Destination* 27/1/35  
 132. Franklin Roosevelt: *On our Way* 28/1  
 133. S. Radhakrishnan: *An Idealist View of Life* 29/1  
 134. G.R. Mitchison: *The First Workers' Government* 10/2

Thirteenth Month

135. Lewis Watt (S.J.): *The Future of Capitalism* 18/2  
 136. Robert Graves: *I, Claudius* 22/2  
 137. Olaf Stapledon: *Last and First Men* 25/2  
 138. Walter de la Mare's Poems 1901 to 1918. 2 Volumes 26/2  
 139. *Six Soviet Plays:*  
     Michael Bulgakov: *Days of the Turbins*  
     Valentin Kataev: *Squaring the Circle*  
     Nikolai Pogodin: *Tempo* 27/2  
     Anatole Glebov: *Inga*  
     A. Afjnogenyew: *Fear*  
     Vladimir Kershon: *Bread*  
 140. Swami Vivekananda: *Jnana Yoga* 10/3/35  
 141. *The Berlin Diaries*—Journals of a General in the  
     German War Ministry edited by Dr Helmut Klotz 13/3  
 142. Bertrand Russell: *Freedom & Organisation* 14/3

Fourteenth Month (16th March 1935 to 15th April)

143. Sherwood Eddy: *The Challenge of the East* 19/3/35  
 144. R. Palme Dutt: *Fascism & Social Révolution* 22/3  
 145. Webster & Heys: *Keeping Fit at Forty* 25/3  
 146. Gore Graham: *War & Peace and the Soviet Union* 26/3

# SELECTED WORKS OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

147. Bernard Shaw: *Collected Prefaces* 31/3
148. A.N. Whitehead: *Adventures of Ideas* 8/4
149. J.B.S. Haldane: *Possible Worlds* 11/4
150. आज का रूस—नित्यनारायण बानर्जी, हिन्दी में अनुवादक :  
ब्रजमोहन वर्मा 14/4

## Fifteenth Month (16th April to 15th May 1935)

151. Georges le Fevre: *An Eastern Odyssey* 19/4
152. Frankwood E. Williams: *Russia, Youth and the  
Present Day World* 22/4
153. W.R. Hiskett: *Social Credits or Socialism* 23/4
154. A. Pinkevich: *Science & Education in the U.S.S.R.* 25/4
155. G.D.H. Cole & others: *What Everybody Wants to  
Know About Money* 28/4
156. *The Best Short Stories of 1934—English & American* 29/4
157. E.F. Griffith: *Modern Marriage & Birth Control* 5/5
158. Ludendorff: *The Coming War* 5/5/35
159. Ernst Toller: *Seven Plays* 10/5
160. Sven Hedin: *Jehol, City of Emperors* 11/5
161. Suraj Krishen Munshi: *Morning Shadows* 12/5
162. F.S. Marvin: *India & the West* 13/5

## Sixteenth Month (16th May to 15th June 1935)

163. Coates: *The Second Five-Year Plan of Development  
of the U.S.S.R.* 18/5
164. Richard B. Gregg: *The Power of Non-Violence* 22/5
165. Moeller van den Bruck: *Germany's Third Empire* 29/5
166. श्री रामनाथ 'सुमन' : हमारे राष्ट्रनिर्माता 1/6
167. Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread* 3/6
168. Romain Rolland: *The Combat* 4/6
169. R.M. Rayner: *The Story of Trade Unionism  
(and Glimpses of World History Vol. 2)* 8/6  
15/6

## Seventeenth Month (16 June 1935 to 15 July)

170. E. Alexander Powell: *The Last Home of Mystery* 24/6/35
171. Mulk Raj Anand: *Untouchable* 25/6
172. प्रेमचन्द : ग़बन 1/7
173. Almora District Gazetteer
174. Stanley Jones: *Christ & Communism* 6/7
175. *Boswell's Johnson Vol. I.* 8/7  
*(and Glimpses of World History Vol. I.)* 14/7



Eighteenth Month (16 July to 15 August 1935)

- |      |  |        |
|------|--|--------|
| 176. | राहुल सांकृत्यायन: साम्यवाद ही क्यों ?                                 | 18/7   |
| 177. | J.F. Horrabin: <i>An Atlas of European History</i>                     | 18/7   |
| 178. | R. Boleslavski & Helen Woodward: <i>Lances Down</i>                    | 21/7   |
| 179. | A.M. Field: <i>Protection of Women &amp; Children in Soviet Russia</i> | 27/7   |
| 180. | प्रेमचन्द : कर्मभूमि   | 27/7   |
| 181. | Rene Fulop-Miller: <i>The Power &amp; Secret of the Jesuits</i>        | 5/8/35 |
| 182. | G.K. Chesterton: <i>The Outline of Sanity</i>                          | 11/8   |
| 183. | Sir James Jeans: <i>The Mysterious Universe</i>                        | 12/8   |

Nineteenth Month (16 August to 15 September 1935)

- |      |   |         |
|------|---|---------|
| 184. | Gorki: <i>Reminiscences of Tolstoy, Chekhov and Andryev</i> | 17/8/35 |
| 185. | Louis Golding: <i>Five Silver Daughters</i>                 | 25/8    |
| 186. | श्रीराम शर्मा : शिंकार                                      | 29/8    |
| 187. | Gilbert Murray—Tagore: <i>East and West</i>                 | 30/8    |
| 188. | T.H. Wintringham: <i>The Coming World War</i>               | 2/9     |





## ARTICLES WRITTEN IN PRISON

Nearly four years ago, when we went both together to New Central Prison, Santa Fe, Santa Fe told me of his intention to translate *Rahmanmangal*. I gladly encouraged him to do so and saw the beginnings of the undertaking. We came out of prison and went both later and we both got out, and finally in we have spent the last four years. But we were kept in different jails and more high walls and iron gates separated us, and I was unable to follow the progress of the translation. It turned out to be a much easier undertaking than I had imagined and I was glad that the translator persevered with his work in spite of the difficulties and delays inseparable from a prison life.

It was Kunit Pandit's wish, in those early days when he began the translation, that it should be introduced to the public by a preface or a foreword from my father, Pandit Motilal Nehru. Indeed one of the reasons which led him to translate this ancient story of our old home was to enable my father to read it, for he knew no Sanskrit. But that was not to be and now I am told that in his absence the duty of writing that foreword devolved upon me. I must play the substitute however poorly qualified I may be for the task.

It is for scholars and learned men to appraise and judge this translation. That is not my task. I feel a little perturbed by the ability, learning and tireless industry that Kunit Pandit has put into this work. It was a work worth doing. Nearly half a century ago, the 'S. P. Pandit' wrote of the *Rahmanmangal* that it was "the only work which is deserving of being having any pretensions to be considered as a history." Such a book must necessarily have importance for every student of old Indian history and culture.

It is a history and it is a poem, though the two perhaps go ill together, and in a translation especially we have to suffer for this combination. For we cannot reproduce the music of the poetry, the spirit of Kishan's noble and melodious language, only the intellect and the extravagant conceits remain. The translator has preferred

1. *Indian Daily Dispatch* Vol. 28 June 1914. (IN Paper, N.M.H.). K.S. Pandit's translation of *Rahmanmangal* was first published in 1915. The book is an analysis of the epics which saved Kishan from the cruel prison where Gopal was a friend of the Pandit in Kishan's time, viz. 1840 A.D.

2. 1913-1914, a Sanskrit scholar who was a friend of Kishan's.





## 1. Foreword to *Rajatarangini*<sup>1</sup>

Nearly four years ago, when we were both together in Naini Central Prison, Ranjit Pandit told me of his intention to translate Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*. I warmly encouraged him to do so and saw the beginnings of this undertaking. We came out of prison and went back later and so, in and out, and mostly in, we have spent the last four years. But we were kept in different gaols and many high walls and iron gates separated us, and I was unable to follow the progress of the translation. It turned out to be a much vaster undertaking than I had imagined and I was glad that the translator persevered with his work in spite of the difficulties and delays inseparable from a residence in gaol.

It was Ranjit Pandit's wish, in those early days when he began the translation, that it should be introduced to the public by a preface or a foreword from my father, Pandit Motilal Nehru. Indeed one of the reasons which led him to translate this ancient story of our old homeland was to enable my father to read it, for he knew no Sanskrit. But that was not to be, and now I am told that, in his absence, the duty of writing that foreword devolves upon me. I must play the substitute however poorly qualified I may be for the task.

It is for scholars and learned men to appraise and judge this translation. That is not my task. I feel a little overwhelmed by the ability, learning and tremendous industry that Ranjit Pandit has put into this work. It was a work worth doing. Nearly half a century ago, Mr. S. P. Pandit<sup>2</sup> wrote of the *Rajatarangini* that it was "the only work hitherto discovered in India having any pretensions to be considered as a history." Such a book must necessarily have importance for every student of old Indian history and culture.

It is a history and it is a poem, though the two perhaps go ill together, and in a translation especially we have to suffer for this combination. For we cannot appreciate the music of the poetry, the charm of Kalhana's noble and melodious language, only the inexactitude and the extravagant conceits remain. The translator has preferred

1. Dehra Dun District Jail, 28 June 1934. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. R.S. Pandit's translation of *Rajatarangini* was first published in 1935. The book is an analysis of the dynasties which ruled Kashmir from the earliest period when Gonanda ruled as a vassal of the Pandavas to Kalhana's time, i.e., 1149 A.D.
2. (1840-1894); a distinguished Sanskrit scholar and editor of Sanskrit works.



a literal rendering, sometimes even at the cost of grace of language, and I think he has chosen rightly, for in a work of this kind exactitude is necessary.

Written eight hundred years ago, the story is supposed to cover thousands of years, but the early part is brief and vague, and sometimes fanciful, and it is only in the later periods, approaching Kalhana's own times, that we see a close-up and have a detailed account. It is a story of medieval times and often enough it is not a pleasant story. There is too much of palace intrigue and murder and treason and civil war and tyranny. It is the story of autocracy, and military oligarchy here as in Byzantium or elsewhere. In the main it is a story of the kings and royal families and the nobility, not of the common folk—indeed the very name is the 'River of Kings'.

And yet Kalhana's book is something far more than a record of kings' doings. It is a rich storehouse of information, political, social and to some extent economic. We see the panoply of the middle ages, the feudal knights in glittering armour, quixotic chivalry and disgusting cruelty, loyalty unto death and senseless treachery; we read of royal amours and intrigues and of fighting and militant and adulterous queens. Women seem to play quite an important part, not only behind the scenes but in the councils and the fields as leaders and soldiers.

Sometimes we get intimate glimpses of human relations and human feelings, of love and hatred, of faith and passion. We read of Suyya's<sup>3</sup> engineering feats and irrigation works; of Lalitaditya's<sup>4</sup> distant wars of conquest in far countries; of Meghavahana's<sup>5</sup> curious attempt to spread nonviolence also by conquest; of the building of temples and monasteries and their destruction by unbelievers and iconoclasts who confiscated the temple treasures. And then there were famines and floods and great fires which decimated the population and reduced the survivors to misery.

It was a time when the old economic system was decaying, the old order was changing in Kashmir as it was in the rest of India. Kashmir had been the meeting-ground of the different cultures of Asia, the western Greco-Roman and Iranian and the eastern Mongolian;—but essentially it was a part of India and the inheritor of Indo-Aryan traditions.

3. In the reign of Avantivarman (855-883 A.D.) Suyya regulated the course of the river Vitastha with a view to improve the drainage of the valley.

4. (c 700-736 A.D.); a celebrated king of Kashmir who took the city of Kanauj and extended his conquests to the far south.

5. Meghavahana's conquest was motivated by the imposition of ahimsa upon other kings.



And as the economic structure collapsed it shook up the old Indo-Aryan polity and weakened it and made it an easy prey to internal commotion and foreign conquest. Flashes of old Indo-Aryan ideals come out but they are already out of date under the changing conditions. War-lords march up and down and make havoc of the people. Popular risings take place—Kalhana describes Kashmir as “a country which delighted in insurrection!”—and they are exploited by military leaders and adventurers to their own advantage. We reach the end of that period of decay which ultimately ushered in the Muslim conquest of India. Yet Kashmir was strong enough because of its mountain fastnesses to withstand and repulse Mahmud of Ghazni, the great conqueror, who made a habit of raiding India to fill his coffers and build up an empire in Central Asia.<sup>6</sup> It was nearly two hundred years after Kalhana wrote his history that Kashmir submitted to Muslim rule, and even then it was not by external conquest but by a local revolution headed by a Muslim official of the last Hindu ruler, Queen Kota.<sup>7</sup>

I have read this story of olden times with interest because I am a lover of Kashmir and all its entrancing beauty; because, perhaps, deep down within me and almost forgotten by me, there is something which stirs at the call of the old homeland from where we came long, long ago; and because I cannot answer that call as I would, I have to content myself with dreams and fantasies, and I revisit the glorious valley girt by the Himalayan snows through books and cold print. As I write this my vision is limited by high walls that seem to close in upon me and envelop me and the heat of the plains oppresses me. But Kalhana has enabled me to overstep these walls and forget the summer heat, and to visit that land of the Sun God “where realizing that the land created by his father is unable to bear the heat, the hot-rayed sun honours it by bearing himself with softness in summer,” where dawn first appears with a golden radiance on the eternal snows and, in the evening, “the daylight renders homage to the peaks of the towering mountains,” where in the valley below, the lazy sleepy Vitastha winds slowly through smiling fields and richly-laden fruit trees, and creeps under the lordly *chenars*, and passes through still lakes covered with lotus blooms, and then wakes up and rushes down the gorges to the plains of the Punjab below. Man has sunk low there in his poverty but nature remains cruel and unfeeling, yet soft and smiling to

6. He undertook seventeen expeditions to India during the years 1000 to 1026.

7. The widow of Udaiyana Deva, the last ruler of Kashmir, was overthrown by her minister, Shah Mirza. The latter ascended the throne in 1346 A.D.



the eye and the senses. "The joy of plunging into the Ganga is not known to those who reside in the sandy deserts," writes Kalhana; how can the dwellers in the plains know of the joys of the mountains, and especially of this jewel of Asia, situated in the heart of that mighty continent?

The translator has used, as he should, the scholar's method of transcription for Samskrit names and words. He must forgive me if, being a layman, I do not fancy this, and so, with all apologies to the International Congress of Orientalists, I propose to continue to write Samskrit and Krishna and not Samskrta or Krsna. I do not like an old friend to develop an alien look, and what seem to be five consonants all in a bunch are decidedly foreign and strange-looking to me.

It is not for me to congratulate the translator, who is both my brother-in-law and a dear comrade, but I should like to commend especially his valuable notes and appendices.

## 2. The Past and the Present<sup>1</sup>

I am grateful for the privilege accorded to me of contributing to the *Janam Ashtami* number of the *Tej*, but I am afraid I cannot throw any light, as has been suggested, on the old Aryan civilisation or on the glorious past of the Hindus. That is the work of the scholar and the historian, and I am neither. I am but a student, a seeker after knowledge, whose great regret is that the business of politics does not encourage this quest. George III of England once defined politics as a trade for a rascal and not for a gentleman. If that is a correct definition, then indeed I am specially rascally and have wandered far from the ways of gentle folk.

But sometimes the fates are kind and little opportunities occur of dipping into the past and reading of the doings of the giants of old. It is an absorbing study. The more I read of the Aryans of old the more I wonder at their many-sided excellence. Fresh from their cradle in Central Asia they came down to India and swept over western Asia and Europe. They were full of life and the joy of life, and the burden

1. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. Presumably written in August 1934. This article does not seem to have been published.



of the world sat lightly upon them. It was indeed the *Satyayuga*, the dawn of history, and the long ages of sin and sorrow had yet to come. Warriors they were who rejoiced in battle and yet bowed down to knowledge and virtue. They loved to fight and conquer but the greatest quest for them was the search for knowledge. They loved freedom and honour and preferred death to dishonour of the Aryan name. "Never shall an Arya be subjected to slavery" was their proud charter. And so they marched into India singing songs in praise of the high gods, with faith in themselves and, like the Saracens thousands of years later, in the firm belief that heaven was guiding them in their divine mission.

It is good to think of the past and to gather strength and courage from the examples of the great men of old. But it is also dangerous, and in India we are specially liable to this danger. We are prone to think too much of it and to endow the ancients with every virtue under the sun. And instead of any desire to emulate them and to gird up our loins for the purpose, we sink further into apathy and bemoan our miserable lot. We have vague ideas of past splendour and a golden age when the land flowed with milk and honey, and sorrow and suffering hid themselves away from the haunts of men. We do not analyse the springs of past greatness or try to find out what qualities we lack which our ancestors possessed. I think that we can learn a great deal from them; none the less let us remember that the world has not remained stationary during the last few thousand years. The world progresses and advances in knowledge and culture even though there are occasional lapses and retrogression. All history teaches us this lesson of general progress, and indeed life would be a burden difficult to carry if we did not believe that a better order of things is gradually evolving itself in this world of sorrow. To that order our ancient civilisation can contribute a great deal, but only if we understand its essentials and live up to them and not lose ourselves in a forest of empty forms and symbols, forgetting the core and the essence.

I shall not venture to enumerate the essentials of that ancient civilisation. I am not competent to do that. But I shall touch briefly on some obvious points. It seems to me that the old Aryans were a very 'positive' people. They were active and inquisitive and adaptable. They loved freedom and would suffer no restrictions on their physical or mental liberty. They were not afraid of thinking, of "looking down into the pit of hell", if necessary, and of arriving at novel and disconcerting conclusions. They looked forward in the realms of thought, as well as towards the countries of the earth, for fresh advances and conquests. They had the spirit of adventure in them and life was



to them a wonderful game, a quest after the knowledge of this world and the next.

And we, their puny descendants, who pride ourselves in our high ancestry, what are we? A passive, inactive and indolent race forgetful of the idea of freedom or honour. Our guiding principles in life are a number of restrictions. Thou shalt not eat or drink with another, thou shalt not touch such and such, thou shalt not cross the seas and so on and so forth. The one great restriction of old we have forgotten: "Thou shalt not be subjected to slavery." We have little time to think of it, I suppose, for we are too busy with our cooking and our other ceremonial practices. Like the frog of old we sit in our stagnant pool and imagine that it is the centre of the universe and all knowledge and virtue are in us and there is nothing more to seek or discover. And nature has had its revenge on us. The world has marched on and left us far behind immersed in our superstitions and observances which we do not even understand. Like our old architecture, our faith has lost its ancient purity and simplicity and has been covered up with a mass of abuses and crude symbols and orientation. Today the keepers of our consciences are men, narrow and bigoted and with no knowledge of anything except empty forms and ceremonials. There is nothing more frightful, said Goethe, than a teacher who only knows what the scholars are intended to know. But here the teacher is far more ignorant than the scholar.

We must get rid of this inertia and woodenness and recover some elasticity of thought and movement. We must honour reason more and test everything by the light of that reason, however feeble it may be. There is no room for bigots in the modern world. We must cultivate the spirit of enquiry and welcome all knowledge whether the source of it is the East or the West. Above all we must get rid of the gross abuses that have crept into us and threaten to poison our whole system. If we cannot conquer these weaknesses of ours then we sink deeper and deeper into the morass and perish.

But I feel that we can and will survive. A great deal is being said now about the strengthening and purification of Hinduism as practised today. Every person, whether he is a Hindu or not, must welcome any such movement in the interests of a wider culture and human progress. Much more must a Hindu welcome it. Everything that removes the barriers that keep apart one man from another and make a common humanity possible; everything that raises large numbers of human beings and makes life more endurable for them; everything that substitutes reason for ignorant and blind bigotry is ever welcome. We must therefore welcome the movement to broaden the basis of Hinduism



and to rid it of its abuses. But I have noted with sorrow that the motive force behind it is not so much the good of Hinduism as the distrust and fear of the Mussulmans. I have come back from the Hindu Sabha meeting in Benares<sup>2</sup> with this conviction strengthened. The motive is almost entirely political. With this I cannot agree for it can end in only one thing and that is disaster for all the communities in India. No great movement of reform ever flourished if it was based on fear and fed on hatred. Logically a movement of this kind can end in only one way. Fear and distrust will multiply and will call out their sister qualities in the other community. Gradually India will be converted into armed camps and every man's hand will be raised against his brother. That can end only in a terrible catastrophe. That is a prospect which cannot be tolerated and which we must avoid at all cost.

This is the reason why I ventured to question the appropriateness of carrying on the *shuddhi* movement on a mass scale. I believe in giving full liberty to every man to adopt the faith of his choice. I also believe that it should be open to anyone, whoever he may be, to join the Hindu fold, should he desire to do so. But the present *shuddhi* movement,<sup>3</sup> so far as I understand it, is based on different reasons and is proceeding on undesirable lines. And instead of peace and harmony it has created hatred and distrust and bitterness. Toleration has almost ceased to exist and the best of us are not free from ignoble suspicion.

Hinduism has ever prided itself on its toleration. But today it stands in need of a reminder. "All sects deserve reverence for one reason or another," said the great Asoka. "By thus acting a man exalts his own sect, and at the same time does service to the sects of other people..... His Majesty cares not for donations or external reverence as that there should be a growth of the essence of the matter in all sects."

There is a common belief among the Hindus that Islam is an intolerant religion and that it has spread by means of the sword. Most of them would mention the names of Chenghiz Khan and Timur and Mahmud of Ghazni as examples of Muslim tyrants. I wonder how many know that Chenghiz Khan was not even a Mohammedan? Or that Timur was as fond of erecting his favourite pyramids of heads in western Asia where Islam flourished as in India? Or that Mahmud of Ghazni threatened the Khalif at Baghdad with dire penalties? No great

2. Jawaharlal probably had in mind the meeting at Varanasi in November 1933 when he criticised the Mahasabha severely.

3. On 16 October 1933, the Hindu Mahasabha resolved to take steps to prevent the conversion of Hindus to Christianity. Also see *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 356-358.



religion has prospered by forced conversion and the history of Islam shows that its tremendous initial success was due to its toleration as compared to the intolerance of the Christian sects which flourished then in western Asia and Africa. It may surprise many that one of the main charges actually brought forward in Spain against the Saracens by the Christian King Philip III<sup>4</sup> was their spirit of toleration. Among the "apostacies and treasons" of the Saracens in Spain, wrote the Archbishop of Valencia in 1602, was "that they commended nothing so much as that liberty of conscience, in all matters of religion, which the Turks, and all other Mohammedans, suffer their subjects to enjoy", and on this ground, among others, he recommended that they be expelled from Spain. The recommendation was accepted and vast numbers were brutally expelled.<sup>5</sup> It is most interesting to read of a Spanish *Moulvi*, being driven out of the country more than 300 years ago, speak thus to his tormentors of the Inquisition:

Did our victorious ancestors ever once attempt to extirpate Christianity out of Spain when it was in their power? Did they not suffer your forefathers to enjoy the free use of their rites at the same time that they wore their chains? If there have been some examples of forced conversions, they are so rare as scarce to deserve mentioning, and only attempted by men who had not the fear of God and the Prophet before their eyes, and who in so doing have acted directly and diametrically contrary to the holy precepts and ordinances of Islam which cannot, without sacrilege, be violated by any who would be held worthy of the honourable epithet of Mussulman. You can never produce, among us, any bloodthirsty, formal tribunal, on account of different persuasions in points of faiths, that anywise approaches your execrable Inquisition. Our arms, it is true, are ever open to receive all who are disposed to embrace our religion; but we are not allowed by our sacred *Quran* to tyrannise over consciences.

These are the traditions of toleration in Hinduism and Islam. But now, in the twentieth century, when Europe after centuries of slaughter and persecution has established religious toleration, our unhappy country is going backwards and forgetting the very lesson it taught to the world in the olden time. Intolerance is always due to want of understanding and ignorance of each other. Let us therefore try to learn

4. (1578-1621); king of Spain, Naples and Sicily.

5. On 22 September 1609, it was decreed that, with the exception of six of the oldest and most Christian Moriscos in each village who were to be retained to teach their system of cultivation, every Morisco man and woman was to be expelled.



each other's history and understand each other's past culture. The future can only hold out its promise to us if we learn to march together. Our chief enemy today is absence of reason, and its necessary consequence—bigotry. Let those therefore who believe in reason, and in freedom for this country and in human progress fight and conquer this enemy wherever and whenever it is found. There will then be few obstacles to unity and progress.

### 3. Our Literature<sup>1</sup>

A little over two years ago when I was out of prison for a few months, I had been to Benares to see Bhai Shiv Prasadji. I had then the opportunity to meet some friends who were connected with Hindi literature and I naturally took advantage of it. We had a brief discussion on literature. I spoke with hesitation because my knowledge was very limited and therefore I lacked the courage to say very much. Later on I found to my surprise that someone had reported our discussions in the newspapers. I did not see what was published. So I cannot say whether the account was accurate. I also heard that Hindi newspapers were very annoyed with me and heated discussions were taking place with regard to my statements at Benares.<sup>2</sup> I was occupied with other things and could not pay any attention to this and, soon after, I went to prison again.

There is no need to repeat what I had said two years ago. There is nothing special about it. It is futile to argue about my knowledge of Hindi literature. It is very limited. I have read a bit of ancient and modern literature and tried to grasp the trend of ideas in contemporary Hindi literature, the kind of questions it poses and its source of inspiration. This meagre reading and thinking does not entitle me to voice my ignorant opinion in the presence of experts. Under these circumstances it would be very improper on my part to criticise others. Still, with insolence, I shall try to write a few lines on this subject, hoping to profit by the opinions of others.

A few days ago I read in an article in *Vishal Bharat* that "in the opinion of many its (Hindi) literature has developed considerably.

1. Almora District Jail, 28 July 1935. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. Original in Hindi.

2. See *ante*, section 2, item 100.

Its writers have been compared from time to time with Shakespeare, Tolstoy and Bernard Shaw." I was pleased to read it. I was aware that there had been a new awakening in Hindi literature and it was progressing but I did not know that it had reached such heights. I was very keen to read the works of writers who merit comparison with writers like Shakespeare and for this purpose I requested some friends to send me those books. Some books did reach me. I read them but my expectations remained unfulfilled. Probably I did not receive the right books and others might be able to help me in this matter. If the editor of *Vishal Bharat* and some scholars of Hindi literature could prepare a list containing 50 or 100 selected books, it would be of help to many. These books should have been written during the last thirty five years, that is, during this century.

What is literature? This is a subject of discussion in every language and opinions vary. I do not want to enter into this discussion. But most people may agree that in this connection two questions arise—the subject-matter and its treatment. Both are equally necessary.

The primary difficulty is that so far I have received only a few books in Hindi on the subjects which interest me. I desire to understand the contemporary world, to probe beneath the surface of events, about some of which we read in the newspapers, and understand their causes. What are the mysterious forces that are tossing man this way and that, what thoughts and feelings move them and what are the major problems that are besetting our country and the world? My mind, bogged down by these troubles, seeks answers by trying to untie these difficult knots. I am in constant search of light which will illuminate the pervading darkness and show the correct path along which we may progress with confidence.

To understand the world, a mere understanding of politics is not sufficient. Often politics is like a puppet show, controlled, more often than not, by hidden powers. It is necessary to understand all aspects of economics, the strange games played by gold, silver and other currencies, the mighty revolution caused by big machines and factories. What are nationalism, democracy, capitalism and communism—and their influences on the world? What is the progress of the sentiment of internationalism? These are all practical matters on which many persons may be willing to speak or write. But it is not of much use repeating the obvious things. If it is our desire to genuinely understand the phenomena then we shall have to delve deep, and for this we need the right books.

It has also become necessary that we read and know about the present state of other countries—the European countries, Russia,



America, China, Japan, Egypt and many others. It is impossible to understand the present state of affairs without a knowledge of the past. All the questions we face today have their roots in the past. So the knowledge of history becomes necessary, and not merely the history of a nation or two but of the whole world.

We also have to keep in mind that the present-day world and our lives are yoked to science. Therefore, we have to understand the basic principles and the new ideas of science. I have been very interested in this, particularly physics and its new theories—relativity and quantum theory—biology, sociology, psychology and psychoanalysis.

On all these subjects thousands of books are being brought out these days in America and Europe. A good many of them are very ordinary, some are useless but a fair number of them are of a reasonably high standard. In foreign newspapers and magazines also, many articles appear on these topics. I hope a list of the new books in Hindi on these subjects will be prepared. It is clear that books for school and college students written for the purpose of passing examinations should not be included in this list.

I have not mentioned poetry, fiction, drama and other writings which may be classified as pure literature. Names of such books also need inclusion in the list. I have read some of these books and appreciated them. Hindi poems are often very good and beautiful. But at times the sweetness is so excessive that it becomes cloying, like syrup. The choice of subjects is few and rarely involves going beyond these limits. Unfortunately, I have not yet come across any novel in Hindi which could be compared with the famous well-known foreign novels. So far I have not read any play that has satisfied me. My ignorance and unawareness merely demonstrate the deficiency in my education and I desire to make up for it with the help of others.

I also need help in one other matter. What are the contemporary trends of ideas in the Hindi world? Hindi newspapers and magazines indicate a growing spirit of awakening and enquiry in literature but do not provide a clear answer to the above question. I was under the impression that all these matters would be discussed in the Sahitya Sammelan. I am unaware of the extent of the discussions. In the 1935 Sammelan the newspapers revealed that the most important question raised concerned a sum of one lakh.<sup>3</sup> Thus, I have not, to my

3. The All India Sahitya Sammelan was held in Indore on 20 April 1935. Mahatma Gandhi in his presidential address pointed out that in order to spread knowledge of Hindi a collection of one lakh of rupees was necessary to augment the resources of the institutions established in southern India.

shame, been able to understand the important problems which constitute the vital element in any literature. I can say something about the kinds of problems in literature which are under discussion in other countries like America, England, Russia, France, Germany, China and Turkey, but about my own country and my mother tongue I am ignorant.

Let me clarify by elaborating the type of queries that is dealt with in foreign literature. In other countries, there are associations and conferences of creative writers. While many are national, some are international. Sometime back in June 1935, there was a big international literary conference in Paris to which representatives from the whole of Europe and the U.S.A. had come. Its name was International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture. The agenda of the Congress shows the questions on which the literary world of Europe and America is deliberating.<sup>4</sup> I attach a copy of this agenda.<sup>5</sup> I have given it in English for I cannot translate it properly. I hope the editors will get it translated.

I and many others would benefit by knowing the opinions of eminent Hindi literary writers on these topics. I hope they will express their opinion.

4. Among the subjects proposed for discussion were the writers' role in society, and literary creation.

5. Not printed.

#### 4. Literature in Hindi and in Other Languages<sup>1</sup>

Once, at an informal discussion, I had said that in the last forty or fifty years, among our provincial languages, Bengali, Marathi and Gujarati had progressed more than Hindi. This statement upset some Hindi writers and they were annoyed with me. I had absolutely no intention of saying anything against the richness of Hindi, but perhaps my meaning was not clear and it might have been misunderstood by some. Later I learnt that many who knew more than I did, held the same opinion. So I am being bold enough to write about this.

1. Almora District Jail, 29 July 1935. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. Original in Hindi.



I was not thinking of ancient Hindi literature. I am also aware that there has been an awakening and progress in modern Hindi literature. What I meant was that among our provincial languages this awakening first took place in Bengali, then in Marathi and Gujarati and only later in Hindi. Because of this, initially Bengali, Marathi and Gujarati progressed a little ahead. Why is this awakening in all languages taking place? There are various reasons, but the primary one is the influx of new ideas. The literature, culture and political condition of any country are closely knit. It was perhaps the English poet Milton who had written somewhere that if shown the language of any country, without knowing anything else about it, he could tell the type of country it was, free or subject, civilized or uncivilized, strong or weak, brave or timid.

With the decline of our country, our literatures also deteriorated and remained in this condition for a long time. But they began to make progress with the rise of national consciousness. This started first in Bengal. New ideas poured in mostly from Europe and they infused a new life. Our political associations conducted all their work in English. Besides this, their influence filtered into the provincial languages—first Bengali, then Marathi and Gujarati, followed by Hindi. Hindi lagged behind, not because of its ancient literature but because of the late development of political consciousness in Hindi-speaking areas. Besides, as there was no proper communication between the languages, we could not take early advantage of the awakening in other regions.

We should benefit by this experience and establish some relationship among all the languages of the country. Men of letters should form an association and meet occasionally. Then, instead of fostering competition and rivalry, there will be harmony among them and they can help in each other's progress. Ideas will spread fast throughout the country and there will be a growing sense of unity. I have learnt that some attempt is being made to initiate this, but I do not know much about it.

I cherish the hope that such an Indian literary association will include all the languages of India. Hindi and Urdu are not just sister languages, but are two facets of the same body. They have to be merged. Bengali, Marathi and Gujarati are younger sisters of Hindi. The languages of the south are the oldest in our country. Apart from these, other sundry languages should be included in the association. I would even recommend that English be granted a place. It is not one of our languages but it is of considerable importance in the life of our country. It has become a kind of foster language.



There can be considerable disagreement in such an association, especially on the question of script. Some day we will have to resolve such issues, but at the moment it cannot be done, and any effort to do so will result in a lot of heart-burning. On the question of script, the first major step in my opinion would be to decide on a common script for Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati. It can only be achieved by mutual understanding and cooperation. There is hardly any scope for the least bit of coercion.

I am absolutely certain that Hindi or Hindustani should be our national language and it will be so, even though there are two scripts. I also know this—that the major languages of our provinces will make considerable progress and that we should promote them. There is no clash between their advancement and that of adopting Hindi as the national language. Those who in their fervour try to create a conflict will harm both.

Our litterateurs should also maintain contact with the literature of the world and participate in international literary organisations. Without this we cannot rank among the progressive nations of the world. We have to admit that in this modern age, there is an influx of new ideas from America and Europe. Without an understanding of them we cannot confront the present-day world. The primary thing this modern age teaches us is that the world is one and cannot be fragmented and those who wish to remain separate will lag behind.

A number of us should learn foreign languages. They will be the windows through which we can look at the world and through which sunlight and fresh air will come in. Many of us know English and we should take advantage of this as this language is constantly expanding. It is mainly because of the United States—the wealthiest and the most powerful nation at present. But a mere knowledge of English is not enough, and this has resulted in our being often deceived. We have begun to see the world through English eyes, not realising that they are biased. Despite our political struggle against the British rule, we remain slaves of British thought. It is only their books that we read, their newspapers and the news communicated by them that we obtain. This does have a strong effect on us. If we read French, German and Russian books or newspapers we would realise that there is more to the world besides the English and we would not give disproportionate importance to them. It is therefore imperative that some of our boys and girls learn foreign languages other than English—specially French, German, Russian and Spanish (which is spoken all over South America). It would also be worthwhile for some of our people to learn Japanese and Chinese. There are still



quite a few people knowing Persian in our country.

In Europe it is presumed that an educated person knows at least two or three languages; and this is often the case. It will be a little more difficult for us, and not many can learn foreign languages. It would therefore be better if well-known books in foreign languages are translated into Hindi. This seems all the more necessary, if we desire to understand the current trend of thoughts in the world. Such books are very few at present and even those are not well translated. Our translators—especially those employed in newspapers—make literal translations, rarely concerning themselves with the inner meaning of words and phrases. Those who love words know that every word has life, a soul and a history and this makes it difficult to explain, let alone translate. Our university students bravely go on translating in a hurried manner, unthinkingly—words are just plucked out of the dictionary and thrust in. This turns the throbbing, pulsating and lively word into a lifeless corpse and that which had sense becomes meaningless. This massacre of the innocent causes sorrow.

## 5. The Meaning of Words<sup>1</sup>

To translate from one language to another language is a very difficult task. The fact is that real translation of even slightly profound thought is just impossible. What is the function of a language? It helps us to think. Language is semi-frozen thought—imagination converted into statues. Its second function is to enable one to express one's ideas and convey them to others, so that we may exchange thoughts. There are other uses of language too, but we need not now go into them. A word or a phrase comes to our mind in the form of a certain image. Simple and straight words like table, chair, horse and elephant form easy and clear images and when we utter these words listeners also form in their minds images, almost of the same type. We can then say that they have understood our meaning.

But the moment we step ahead of these simple and easy words complications at once set in. Even an ordinary phrase produces many pictures in the mind and it is possible that in the listener's mind

1. Almora District Jail, 1 August 1935. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. Original in Hindi.



different pictures are produced. Much depends upon the mental faculties of the speaker and the listener—their education, their experiences, knowledge, inspirations and feelings. Now proceed a step further and take abstract and complicated words such as truth, beauty, ahimsa, dharma, *mazhab*. So very often during the day do we use these words, but if asked to explain their meaning fully we may face a lot of difficulty. Such words will sometimes not produce identical images in the minds of two people. It means we could not bring home to the other what we meant and although both of us uttered the same word we meant different things. The more complicated and abstract the ideas we put forward, the more these difficulties increase. It is also possible (and it has happened) that because of such misunderstandings we may quarrel and smash each other's skulls.

This difficulty can arise between two persons who speak the same language, are literate and civilised and brought up in the same culture. If one is literate and the other illiterate and crude, then the difference between them is wider and it is impossible to understand each other fully. They live in two worlds. But these difficulties look small when compared to those of two persons who speak two different languages and do not know much about the cultures of each other. Their mental ideas and images differ as heaven and earth. They hardly understand each other. What surprise, then, if they do not trust each other and are afraid of and quarrel with each other?

A philologist, Professor J.S. Mackenzie, who has deeply studied languages and their relations, has written, "an Englishman, a Frenchman, and an Italian cannot by any means bring themselves to think quite alike, at least on subjects which involve any depth of sentiment: they have not the verbal means." This despite the fact that an Englishman, a Frenchman, a German and an Italian are the products of one culture and their languages are closely related. Even so, it is said that on any abstract topic, they cannot by any means think alike because their languages differ! If this is their condition, what will be the relation between the languages of an Indian and an Englishman? By wearing a *dhoti* and *kurta* an Englishman does not start thinking like an Indian just as the latter cannot understand the civilisation of Europe by putting on a coat and trousers and by eating with knife and fork.

When such are the problems in understanding each other, what should the poor translator do? How should he deal with these problems? He should first of all realise these difficulties and know that translation does not mean looking at words in the dictionary. He has to know the two languages very well and also the cultures behind them.



He should try to forget himself and become one with the ideas of the author and then put these ideas in his own words in the other language.

I think our translators rarely try to reach this depth and mostly translate as in the newspapers. Often I have come across such words and phrases in Hindi that have stunned me. I saw trade union translated as *vyapar sangh*—perfectly correct from the literary point of view. But can anyone, who does not know, understand that *vyapar sangh* stands not for traders but for labourers? The phrase, trade union, has behind it a history of over a hundred years. Those who know will realise how this name was given. In France this is not the name, nor is that the translation. They call it *syndicat* (from which syndicate has been adopted in English). Suppose we are translating from French to Hindi, shall we translate it as syndicate or something like that? This is a simple example—the real problem arises when more complicated words occur.

Secondly, translators should, as far as possible, use easy and simple words which do not have many meanings and do not deceive. Long phrases should be avoided. Well-known literary works of all the existing languages of the world have been translated, and translated very well, in many languages. There is no reason why in Hindi also there should not be such good translations. I am sure when our translators give their attention to this matter, this urgent work also will be successfully done. Our big problem is that the B.A.s and M.A.s of our universities know very little English and no other foreign language at all.

Ordinary literary books can be translated but the correct translation of books of religion, philosophy and such abstract subjects seems to be impossible. There the words carry very different meanings, like a dress that is worn by dozens of men; how is one to make a distinction between the various meanings? It is one word but still not one, and conveys different images in the mind—such as beauty, truth, religion, *mazhab*. Take beauty for example—the beauty of a woman, of nature, of an idea, of art, of truth, of a phrase, of character, of a novel and so many more can be added—what is common between them all? Stating that a thing that is liked by persons that pleases them is beauty will be somewhat confusing; and there is no agreement on this.

There are many such confusing words which can convey many meanings, in every language. There are some words which are obsolete and mean nothing. Some words are mendicants and about them Matthew Arnold had said—"terms thrown out, so to speak, at a not fully grasped object of the speaker's consciousness." Some words are



known as 'nomads', they wander, and do not mean anything in special. Such words are to be found in every language and those persons specially who have no clarity of thought use them. They hide their weaknesses in long, confusing and to some extent meaningless words. That prose in which such words are used profusely (I do not at the moment mean such words as beauty, truth) becomes weak. Such writing has not a razor's edge nor can it attain its objective as does an arrow from a bow.

We can try to see that these obsolete, mendicant and nomad words are not used, as far as possible, in our speech and writing. The fault is not of the poor words, but of our minds, semi-learned and less disciplined. One affects the other. Those who speak and those who write make the language, but, then, it leaves a similar effect on those new persons who use it. In old languages like Samskrit, Greek and Latin, looseness of thought or word is rarely allowed. They seem well-knit, sharp as a weapon and devoid of useless words. This gives them a glamour and a dignity which leaves a peculiar impression. Of current languages, French perhaps is the most trim and the French people are known for their mental discipline and chastity of expression.

The somewhat useless words, then, can be tackled in this way, but what are we to do about our abstract words of a higher level? We love them, they are necessary for us and often help make us prominent. But still, they are confusing and sometimes mean so much that they become meaningless. Take for example the idea of God. In every religion and language thousands of words are attributed in His praise. It looks as if man's mind could not comprehend this idea and to hide its weakness, opened the dictionary and hurled all the turgid and impressive words that one could lay one's hands upon, over His head. It was beyond the mental faculty to understand the meanings of those words, but having said and written a lot, a sort of consolation was gained that we have done our duty and that God should have no grudge against us at least. Thousands are the names of Allah, as if by adding the names the reality becomes clearer. In English they describe God as absolute, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, perfect, ultimate, immutable, eternal, etc. All this no doubt sounds frightening, but if impertinently one ponders over these words, one gets nowhere. The renowned American philosopher William James<sup>2</sup> has written thus about it: "The ensemble of the metaphysical attributes imagined by the theologian is but a shuffling and matching of the pedantic dictionary adjectives. One feels that in the theologian's

2. (1841-1910); author of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.



hands they are only a set of titles obtained by a mechanical manipulation of synonyms; verbosity has taken the place of vision, professionalism that of life."

Similarly the Italian philosopher, Croce,<sup>3</sup> in disgust, explained the word—sublime—thus: "The sublime is everything that is or will be so called by those who have employed or shall employ the name." There is hardly anything left to say after this and everyone should be convinced.

These high-class sublime matters are undoubtedly beyond a layman's reach; and let the pundits and learned decide, when to use the abstract words and how to translate them. All the same, we laymen should not forget that words are dangerous things and the more abstract, the more deceiving. And the most dangerous words, perhaps, are *dharma* and *mazhab*. Everyone in his heart understands them in his own way. In everyone's heart they form new impressions. Some will think of a temple, mosque or church; the others of a few books, or of some religious oblations, statues, philosophy, customs or of mutual disagreements. In this way one word will produce hundreds of different pictures in the minds of men, and that will bring out a variety of thoughts. It seems to be the weakness of the language that one word can produce such a varied effect. A word should, actually, connote just one picture. It means that *dharma* or *mazhab* has a hundred facets, each of which should have a separate word for it. They say there were more than two hundred words used for making love in the old American Maya language. How can we now translate all those words correctly?

In the use of words Mahatma Gandhi too is guilty to some extent. In general whatever he speaks or writes is precise and effective—no superfluous words and no attempt at a flowery style. This trimness is his power. But whenever he talks of God, the truth or ahimsa—and that he does very often—then that mental precision is lessened. God is truth, truth is God, nonviolence is truth, truth is nonviolence—all this he has said. It must mean something but it is not quite clear what. To me at least, such use of words suggests that injustice is being done to them.

3. Benedetto Croce (1866-1952).



## 6. Bhai Parmanand and Swaraj<sup>1</sup>

I have just read an article by Bhai Parmanandji, *What is Swarajya?* (*Saraswati*,<sup>2</sup> August, 1935). I read it with much hope that it will, to an extent, help in understanding and solving this difficult question. But on reading it, I was taken aback. Bhaiji is a prominent leader of the Hindu Mahasabha and he has every right to explain its object and aim. In fact, he can do so with unique authority. But his understanding of the political aim of the Congress, which is not a secret matter, is really strange. If some others also have understood it the way Bhaiji has done, then is it a surprise that there is so much of misunderstanding?

Bhaiji has interpreted Swarajya in two ways—the first way, in short, is sticking to one's *swa* or self, that is following one's religion, civilisation, culture and rituals and the second way is giving up one's own self and accepting that of the ruling power—abandoning our religion, forgetting our ancestors and quitting our caste. As examples, he has given the time when Islamic rule prevailed in India and the cases of Egypt and Iran. Then he has told us that the Hindu Mahasabha is trying for the Swarajya of the first kind, i.e., the preservation of religion and caste and the Congress is making efforts for securing the second type of Swarajya, i.e., to abolish one's own caste and adopt that of another. Bhaiji also says that the easiest way of getting such Swarajya is for all of us to give up our religion and adopt Christianity in which case we will become English and we shall become free.

While commenting on any article it is always good to understand and state correctly our adversary's views; otherwise we flail the air. I have never heard before such criticism as Bhaiji has made about the Congress, and I fail to understand how any responsible man like him could make such a baseless allegation. Even a child in India could tell him that this charge is entirely wrong.

In a short article Bhaiji has, in my opinion, written something very controversial and wrong and one feels like saying something about it. With due regard to him, I want to bring to his notice that there are a few in the Congress also who know a little of 'Hindu' history and world history (how history becomes 'Hindu' or 'Muslim,' I cannot

1. Almora District Jail, 6 August 1935. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. Original in Hindi.  
2. Hindi monthly, established in 1900 and published from Allahabad.



understand—but he perhaps means the history of the Hindus of India). The example of Egypt and Iran that Bhaiji has cited does not seem to be correct to me but it is not possible here to enter into all those details. So also, I shall not deal with many of the other matters dealt with by him. I hope Bhaiji will write this article in greater detail and will cite there the events and proofs on which he has based his conclusions.

In particular, he should provide evidence for his opinion about the aim of the Congress because it is not right to frame any charge without sufficient proof and evidence. It is very strange that the Congress should noncooperate, perform satyagraha and fight British rule, in order to become like the British (or the Christians), while the Hindu Mahasabha, to maintain our old traditions and integrity, should support the government.

Bhaiji has just not paid any attention to the main topic in his article. He was caught up in the general weakness—verbosity—and forgot the main point. The question "What is Swarajya?" is a very common as well as an extremely important one. For a long time Babu Bhagavan Dasji has been trying to find an answer to it but very few others have paid any attention to it. The result has been a general confusion and everyone is interpreting Swarajya in his own way. This explains Bhai Parmanand's far-reaching conclusions—no one else has ever gone that far. I cannot touch at the moment on all the aspects of Swarajya nor am I rightly entitled to speak for the Congress. But still I want to draw attention to some elementary but basic facts which most people know.

Firstly, the word Swarajya is concerned with the relations of one country with another country or countries and this relationship is generally political, economic, cultural and social. If a country is not dependent upon others economically and politically, it is then called independent. Here also there is often a deception—countries politically free are, behind the screen, economically slaves to some other country. It should also be kept in view that in the present-day world, due to international trade, fast communications, aeroplanes, telegraph and radio, all countries have become so closely knit that none of them could be said to be completely free, and each influences the other. Still, we can say that countries that are politically and economically free are independent. In such an independent country there does not arise any question of social and cultural freedom, for that is implied. The government or people of that country may do whatever they like in this respect. If they want to stick to their old customs and civilisation,



nobody can replace these. If the government want to change these customs and civilisation, who can stop them?

There is yet another aspect of the word *Swarajya*—what should be the relation—political, economic, social and cultural—between the people within the country? This leads to many complicated issues and there are varied opinions on this. In the present-day world, in most countries (excepting those which are fascist) the people would opt for democracy. This also is of different types—should it be mere political democracy or economic and social democracy too? Such questions as capitalism and communism arise here.

What is the aim of the Congress? First, naturally, that our country be independent, politically and economically, as other countries are. This means our cultural, social and religious freedom is included in it and no outsider has any right to interfere with them. Our country will decide for itself what it wants.

What is the aim of the Congress within India? It is a bit more difficult to reply, except that it is in favour of political democracy. It has not decided anything further, which to a great extent means that it does not want to make any change in the present set-up. The Congress is before the country in the form of a big institution, which in fact is an all party conference consisting of men of different opinions, united only on political independence. On economic and social problems some Congressmen favour communism, some capitalism and some others something else. Most of the Congress leaders favour modern capitalism and do not want much change in that.

But where does Bhai Parmanand's question of giving up one's 'self' arise? Where arises the question of leaving our culture, religion or caste? What is this 'self', and what is Hinduism in the opinion of Bhaji? Once his views are known correctly then these questions can be tackled. Among the Hindus, casteism is deep rooted. Would Bhaji retain it in Hinduism? As far as I know he is against it and is a member of *Jat Pat Torak Mandal*<sup>3</sup> for the abolition of caste. Then we have many customs—regarding widows, succession, marriage, death, worshipping, eating, untouchability, dress and many other matters. Which of these are to be included in Hinduism? It can be argued that these are all spurious rules and to know the real ones we should go to the Vedas or to our philosophy. Many Hindus will not agree that these spurious rules be given no importance. They think them

3. The *Jat Pat Torak Mandal* of Lahore was an organisation which sought the abolition of caste barriers and promotion of intercaste dining and intercaste marriage.



to be more significant than the Vedas. And if you proceed beyond the Hindus proper and include Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains, (which I am glad the Hindu Mahasabha is trying to) then the complications grow more intense. There is a lot of difference between Buddhist philosophy and Hindu philosophy. The Buddhists attach no significance to the Vedas. They do not believe in God even. In such a state, is it surprising if laymen like me get confused? It is, therefore, necessary that both Bhai Parmanand and the Hindu Mahasabha should clarify their stand about 'self'; which Hinduism do they want to maintain in our country? It should also be stated frankly in what way, in their opinion, the Congress is sacrificing this 'self'. Those who think, try to come out of the web of words and talk and write distinctly. Only then can these matters be considered; otherwise they are words merely for provocation.

I had an inkling—maybe I am wrong—that the 'self' in which the Hindu Mahasabha is specially interested relates to official jobs and membership of the councils—the number of posts of tehsildars, deputy collectors, police officers that should be reserved for Hindus.<sup>4</sup> I have also noted that the Hindu Mahasabha has very great affection for rajas, talukdars, big zamindars and bankers and is worried about the protection of their rights. It opposed laws relating to rent on the ground that they were harmful to the money-lenders,<sup>5</sup> although they might be beneficial to the farmers and small zamindars. Are all these matters a part of Hinduism? Is the extraction of interest by the bankers also a part of our 'self' which we have to protect?

One more point is worth considering. Historians are of the opinion that with the establishment of Muslim kingdoms the centre of Hindu civilisation and culture shifted towards the south of India. There the Muslim penetration was less. The old Hindu *varnashram dharma* is the strongest in the south even now. It may be weakest in the Punjab. The reason for it is obvious. In our country the Punjab and Sind had the closest relations with the Muslim kings and kingdoms. But today the Hindu Mahasabha has the Punjab as its stronghold and in the south it is hardly known.

4. On 31 July 1933, the All India Hindu Mahasabha, in a memorandum to the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee, drew attention to the reduction in the representation of Hindus in the Punjab, Bengal and the central legislature. The Hindus of North West Frontier Province demanded the appointment of a public service commission and the reservation of seats in the district boards.
5. The Punjab Provincial Hindu Sabha was reported on 25 May 1934 to have opposed the legislation on rural indebtedness.



I have been very fond of the history of culture and civilisation and that actually is history, the rest being merely the accessions, wars and deaths of kings. Whenever there is a talk of culture and civilisation I become attracted and try to learn and understand a little. Sir Mohammad Iqbal often talks of Islamic culture. I felt confused and so I put several questions to him seeking clarification. He kept silent and did not reply. Bhaiji's saying that if we all become Christians, then our 'self' will become the 'self' of England, she will own us and we shall become free like them, is very similar. It is surprising that any one can have such ideas. It means that Bhaiji thinks that modern European imperialism is for propagation of Christianity! Even a school child would not commit such a folly. How are imperialism and religion related? Abyssinia is a Christian country, the oldest Christian country, converted long before Europe. Why then did Italy attack her?<sup>6</sup> Why also did the last Great War take place between the Christian countries of Europe? Ireland also has been a Christian country for more than a thousand years. Why has British imperialism been suppressing Ireland for the last seven hundred years?

Take the civilisation and customs of these countries. Bhaiji talks of Egypt and Iran who lost their identity and absorbed themselves in the foreign community. Egypt was carrying on for thousands of years, full of ups and downs, transformations, attacks and conquests;—then, about 2,200 years back, Alexander conquered Egypt and after his death one of his generals, Ptolemy, became the king there. He accepted the gods and rituals of Egypt, only mixing a few of his own gods of Greek origin with them. Egypt became a great centre of Greek culture and civilisation. Then after many years it came under the sway of the Roman Empire. Christianity spread there in the very beginning, earlier than in Europe and remained for several hundred years. Later Islam came and won easily. The majority of the Egyptians are now Muslims. Some Christians, also known as Copts, have been there before the Mohammedans. Islam is there for the last 1300 years. In saying that Egypt has lost its identity, what does Bhaiji mean? Of the last 7,000 years of history which period does he consider as the era of the real Egyptian identity?

In Iran also Islam had an easy victory. But people who know say that it did not curb the culture and civilisation of Iran, but on the contrary overpowered even the Arab Muslims and Arab Caliphs, who took over many customs of the old Iranian emperors. This Iranian culture was so impressive that it had its incessant influence from West

6. On 3 October 1935 Italy under Mussolini attacked Ethiopia.



Asia to China. Today this pre-Islamic culture of Iran is gaining much popularity.

Now let us have a quick look at the ancient history of our own country. Hundreds of years before the Aryan entry, here flourished a high-class culture, a sample of which we get at Mohenjodaro. Perhaps it was connected with the Dravidian civilisation which was of an earlier period than that of the Aryans. Then came the Aryans, who defeated the Dravidians and ruled over them. They compromised on customs, religion and gods. This gave rise to a mixed culture with Aryans having a lion's share in it. Then many races, specially the Turkish, invaded this land and settled here. In Rajputana and Kathiawar, many of our royal families have Turkish blood. There was no question of any other religion in those days, because all these Turks were Buddhists from Central Asia. Still they brought many customs and usages from there. In this way in India (in every country for that matter) many rivulets and rivers of culture from different countries flowed in and affected our culture. Islam then came in the garb of a victor and to save ourselves from it we became inward-looking and the ever-open windows of our culture were closed.

When does Bhaji think our Hindu 'self' started? On the coming of the Aryans? Why so? Why should we abandon the earlier Mohenjodaro; and then what happens to the Dravidian period? Are the Dravidians not entitled to say that the Aryans are outsiders who have forcibly settled here? Many such questions can arise, for in history culture, civilisation and ideas flow from one country to the other and influence each other. A line of demarcation is difficult to draw. The sign of any living thing lies in its capacity to grow and change. The moment its growth is stopped it is dead. Similarly, cultures and civilisations also are alive only so long as they have the spirit to change with the ever-changing world. The greatest lesson that history teaches us is that nothing remains static. All the time there is expansion, contraction, revolt and upsurge. Any race that tried to escape change and immobilize itself became a prisoner caught up in its own trap and decayed.

In the olden days when distances were very great and travelling was difficult, countries differed. As communications increased so too did mutual impact. In the modern world, trains, cars and aeroplanes have almost abolished boundaries and built world unity. Books, newspapers, the telegraph, radio, and cinema influence us and gradually change our ideas. We may like them or not, there is no escape from them. They should, therefore, be understood and mastered.

I want to know from Bhaiji what is the stand of our old Hinduism on all these matters? He talks about religion and caste civilisations. But the civilisation of the modern world is that of mighty machinery and gigantic workshops. What have they to do with religions? And without seeking consent or discussing, this civilisation proceeds on its way overthrowing the old institutions. So many movements were afoot to remove casteism among Hindus but the greatest revolution was caused by the railway, the tram and the lorry. Who bothers about the caste of fellow-passengers there?

While pondering over the old history and politics of the modern world, a mass of ideas lights up the mind. The pen fails to keep pace with them, it merely draws black lines on the paper and lags far behind in the race with ideas. Its slow speed creates confusion. Anyway, this article has now become long enough and though still not sufficient and incomplete I shall stop here. It is possible I may again take the help of paper, pen and ink and give shape to my roaming thoughts on these topics. I repeat earnestly—Bhai Parmanand should explain himself and clarify the points I have hinted at in this article.

## 7. Two Mosques<sup>1</sup>

The Shahidganj Masjid of Lahore is daily in the news these days.<sup>2</sup> There is quite an excitement in the city and religious fervour seems dominant on both sides. Attacks on each other, complaints of evil designs of the other and, in between, British rule showing its might as the judge. I do not have an accurate version of the incidents—who started it, who was at fault etc.—and I have no real intention of finding out. Such kinds of religious enthusiasm do not interest me much. But unfortunately, once it is aroused, you have to face it, interest or no interest. I was thinking how backward we are in this country, that we are prepared to sacrifice our lives for such trivial matters and are ready to endure slavery and hunger.

1. Almora District Jail, 7 August 1935. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. Original in Hindi.
2. A dispute between Muslims and Sikhs over possession of lands attached to the Masjid was settled in favour of the Sikhs by the High Court on 19 October 1934. On acquiring possession of the land the Sikhs decided to renovate the building and the Muslims thereupon started an agitation.



From this mosque my attention wandered to another mosque. It is a very famous historical mosque and for the last fourteen hundred years or so, crores of eyes have seen it. It is older than even Islam and in this long life it has witnessed many things. Many empires toppled before it, old kingdoms were destroyed and many religious changes took place. In silence it witnessed all and at every change and revolution changed its dress too. Fourteen hundred years of storm this majestic building faced; the rains washed it, the air scrubbed it with its particles and the dust covered some of its parts. Every stone speaks out its age and magnificence and it seems as if fifteen hundred years have injected the history of the world into its veins and capillaries. It was difficult to stand the tricks and storms of nature for such a long period, but more difficult than this was to endure the crimes and brutality of man. This also, however, it sustained. Before the still eyes of its stones, empires came up and dwindled, religions spread and collapsed, mighty emperors, beautiful women and many talented persons came into existence, lived and then disappeared. It witnessed bravery, baseness and meanness. Big and small, good and bad, all have gone; but those stones still stand. While looking down from their heights even now, I wonder what those stones think of the multitude below—the games of the children, the quarrels, the deceit and the foolishness of the elders—how very little have they learned these thousand years! How much more would it take them to learn and be wise?

A narrow arm of the sea, like a broad river, separates Europe from Asia there. The Bosphorus flows and keeps the two worlds separate. On the hillsides of its European bank there was an old settlement of Byzantium. For long it was part of the Roman Empire, the eastern border of which, up to the early centuries of the Christian era, was in Iraq. But from the eastern side this kingdom was often attacked. The power of Rome was declining and it was not able to protect its far-off borders properly. Sometimes from the west and north, the German barbarians (as the Romans called them) would overrun it and it was a problem to push them back. Sometimes from the east, from Iraq or the Arab side, the Asians would attack and defeat the Roman armies.

The Roman Emperor, Constantine, decided to shift his capital to the east, so as to protect the empire from the eastern onslaught. He selected the picturesque bank of the Bosphorus, and on the tiny hills of Byzantium established a huge city. When Constantinople (or Kustuntunia) came into being, the fourth century of the Christian era was coming to an end. The Roman Empire no doubt became well

established in the east; but now the western border became more remote. After some time the Roman Empire got divided into two parts—the Western Empire and the Eastern Empire. Some years later the Western Empire was destroyed by its enemies. But the Eastern Empire lasted for over one thousand years thereafter and was known as the Byzantine Empire.

The Emperor Constantine not merely changed the capital but brought about yet another change. He accepted Christianity. Earlier the Christians in Rome were greatly tortured. Anyone of them who did not worship the Roman gods or the statue of the emperor could be done to death. They were often thrown before the hungry lions in the arena. It was a favourite sport of the Romans. It was very dangerous to be a Christian in Rome. They were considered as rebels. Now suddenly the situation changed greatly. The emperor himself embraced Christianity and Christianity now became the most honoured religion. Those who worshipped the old gods were now in great difficulty and were tortured by the authorities. Later, only one emperor (Julian)<sup>3</sup> gave up Christianity and again became the worshipper of the old gods but by now Christianity was well established and the old gods of Rome and Greece had to take shelter in the jungles from where also they gradually disappeared.

In this city of Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, massive buildings were built by the orders of the emperors and very soon it developed into a very big city. No other city in Europe could stand comparison with it—even Rome fell far behind. The buildings were erected in a new style—an architecture where the arches, domes, towers and pillars had a style of their own with minute mosaic work on the pillars and towers. This architectural style is known as Byzantine art. In the sixth century a magnificent cathedral was built in this style. It was known as Sankta Sophia or Santa Sophia. It was the most massive church of the Eastern Roman Empire and the emperors desired that it should, by its high quality of art, be unique and suited to the empire. Their desires were fulfilled and even today it is considered the greatest achievement of this Byzantine art.

Later on the Christian religion split into two parts. In fact, there were many divisions but two were major. Rome and Constantinople were engaged in religious wars and became separated from each other. The Bishop of Rome (the most senior) became the Pope and in the western countries of Europe he was regarded as the head. But the

3. (331-363); emperor from 361-363 A.D. He granted freedom of worship to non-Christians and reorganised their priesthood.



Eastern Roman Empire did not recognize him and their Christian community became separate. It was known as the Orthodox Church or sometimes the Greek Church, for the language there had become Greek. The Orthodox Church held sway also in Russia and the nearby regions.

The Cathedral of Santa Sophia was the centre of the Greek Church and so it remained for nine hundred years. Once, in between, the Christians of Rome (who had come to fight the Muslims in the Crusades) attacked Constantinople and overpowered it, but they were soon turned out.

At last, when the Eastern Roman Empire had lasted for more than a thousand years, Santa Sophia also being about nine hundred years old, a new invasion took place which ended that old regime. In the fifteenth century the Osmanli Turks<sup>4</sup> conquered Constantinople and the greatest cathedral there now became the chief mosque. Santa Sophia was named Apa Suphea. In this new form it lasted for hundreds of years. That splendid mosque in a way became a landmark gazed at from long distances with aspirations. In the nineteenth century the Turkish Empire was weakening and Russia gaining ground. Russia was a very big country but a closed one and all over her empire there was not one warm-water port. She therefore cast a covetous eye on Constantinople. More than this was the spiritual and cultural attraction. The czars of Russia used to consider themselves successors to the Eastern Roman emperors and wanted to bring their old capital under their domination. Both were of the same religion, the Orthodox Greek Church, of which the centre was the famous Santa Sophia. For long it had been a mosque. How could that be tolerated? The Greek cross instead of the Islamic mark, *hilal* or the crescent, should be on its dome.

Gradually the Russia of the czars started expanding towards Constantinople. When she came nearer, the other powers of Europe were puzzled. England and France put obstacles, a war ensued and Russia stopped her advance for a while. But again, soon after, the same activity and political manoeuvres began. At last the Great War of 1914 started and in that, England, France, Russia and Italy made secret treaties.<sup>5</sup> Before the world were placed the high ideals of freedom and independence of small countries, but behind the curtain, like vultures waiting for the corpse, the partition of the world started.

This wish also remained unfulfilled. Before that corpse could be reached the Russia of the czars itself came to an end; a revolution took place there which changed the government as well as the social structure.

4. Ancient name of the Turks of the Ottoman Empire.

5. The alliances recognised their spheres of interest.



To expose the cunning of the major imperialistic powers of Europe, the Bolsheviks annulled all the secret treaties and declared that they were against imperialism<sup>6</sup> and did not wish to annex any other country. All had a right to live in freedom.

The victorious powers of the West did not like this clear stand and sane attitude of the Bolsheviks. In their opinion, to bring to light the secret pacts was not a sign of civility. But even if the new regime in Russia was wicked, where was the sense in losing such a prized plunder? They, specially the English, took over Constantinople. After a lapse of fourteen hundred and sixty six years the administration of this old city again changed hands from Muslims to Christians. The Sultan-Caliph was there all right, but he was just a tool to be used at will. Apa Suphea was there too, intact and in the shape of a mosque; but that glamour of freedom, with the Sultans going for prayers, was no longer there.

The Sultan bowed, the Caliph accepted European sovereignty; but a handful of Turks refused to accept it. One of them was Mustafa Kemal who preferred to revolt rather than to serve.

In the meantime there came up a new successor and claimant to Constantinople. These were the Greeks. After the War, Greece was awarded vast lands and started dreaming of her old Eastern Roman Empire. Till now Russia had been in the way, and also naturally Turkey. Now Russia was no longer in competition and the Turks were defeated and deflated. The passage looked open. Influential persons of England and France had been brought round too. There was therefore no apparent hitch.

But there was the great difficulty, the difficulty of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. He faced the Greek onslaught and ruthlessly drove out the Greek army from his country. He turned out the Sultan-Caliph who had backed the enemies of the country. He abolished the institutions of the Sultanate and Caliphate. He raised his prostrate and lifeless country, ravaged by a multitude of problems and enemies, and gave it fresh vigour. His greatest reforms were, however, in the religious and social fields. He pulled the women out of the veil and gave them a leading position in society. He crushed bigotry in religion never to raise its head again. He propagated modern education for all. He put an end to customs and rituals of a thousand years.

From the old capital, Constantinople, he took away its status. For the last fifteen hundred years it had been the capital. Now Ankara, in

6. On 8 November 1917, a day after they assumed power, the Bolsheviks issued a peace decree which proposed an immediate opening of negotiations for a just peace and declared the abolition of secret diplomacy.



Asia, became the capital—a small town, but an emblem of the new Turkish power. The name of Constantinople was also changed. It became Istanbul.

And Apa Suphea—what was its fate? Looking on at the ups and downs of life, that old building of fourteen hundred years stands still in Istanbul. For nine hundred years, it witnessed Greek services and smelt all the incense used in Greek worship. Then for four hundred and eighty years, it heard the *azan* in Arabic and lines of devotees for *namaz* stood on its floor stones.

And now?

One day, in this year 1935, only a few months back, by the orders of Gazi Mustafa Kemal (who has been now given a special title of Ataturk) the Apa Suphea mosque was no more a masjid. Quietly the *hojas*, *mullahs* etc. were replaced and sent to other mosques. Now it has been decided that instead of being a mosque, Suphea be converted into a museum—specially that of the Byzantine period—an era of Christians before the arrival of the Turks. With the Turkish occupation of Istanbul or Constantinople in 1452 A.D., it is understood, the Byzantine art ended. Thus Suphea, now, in a way, went back again to the Christian era—and that on the orders of Kemal.

Great excavations are going on there these days, the mounds of earth are being removed and old mosaics being seen again. Work is going on under the supervision of experts of Byzantine art who have been called from America and Germany.

On the gate is the signboard of the museum and the gate-keeper in his seat. Hand him over your umbrella and stick, take your ticket and have a view inside of the samples of this well-known ancient art. And while going round, think of the peculiar history of this world and let your mind roam thousands of years back and onwards. Strange are the pictures, the spectacles, the tortures and terrors that one comes across. Ask those walls to relate to you their story, and narrate their experiences to you. Maybe the study of yesterday and today will enable you to remove the curtain and peep into the future.

But those stones and walls are silent. They had seen a lot of *jumma namaz* and Sunday services. A daily exhibition is now their lot. The world keeps changing, but they stay. On their worn-out faces is an apparent smirk and a mellow voice as if whispering: how ignorant and foolish is this human creature who does not learn by his thousands of years of experience and repeats the same follies.

8. Quetta<sup>1</sup>

It is curious how sometimes a relatively minor event impresses one more than a major happening. Trivial words or gestures are apt to reveal an individual far more than his studied poses and utterances. So also with nations and peoples and governments. I suppose most people will agree that one of the outstanding events of recent times in India was the shooting down of large numbers of unarmed men and women by General Dyer and his soldiery in the Jallianwala Bagh, and the consequences of this deed were far-reaching. Amritsar, indeed, has become something more than a city of the Punjab, or even the holy place of Sikhism. It typifies the world over a particularly brutal method of dealing with subject peoples. And yet ghastly as all this was, I have never had much difficulty in understanding the mentality of a Dyer, and because of that feeling of at least partial understanding, my resentment against him personally has probably been far less than that of most other Indians. It is true that he made his case unpardonable and wholly inexcusable by his arrogance and vulgar bragging<sup>2</sup> before the Hunter Committee of Inquiry. But even that had a psychological explanation and, granting the vulgarity and the jingoism, the rest more or less followed.

What affected me far more, and I imagine there were many others who felt this way, was the reaction in England to Dyer's deed and his evidence. Officially he was mildly reprimanded and there were no doubt many individuals who condemned him and some newspapers that criticized him strongly. But the real reaction of the British ruling classes was never in doubt. It was clear as daylight, and the *Morning Post* and the House of Lords and the subscription raised for General Dyer shouted it out to the world. This cold-blooded approval of that deed shocked me greatly. It seemed absolutely immoral, indecent; to use public school language, it was the height of bad form. I realized then, more vividly than I had ever done before, how brutal and immoral imperialism was and how it had eaten into the souls of the British upper classes.

My mind went back to this revealing instance the other day when I read about the refusal of the Government of India to allow Gandhiji

1. Almora District Jail, 19 August 1935. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. Published in *India and the World* (1936), pp. 146-155.

2. General Dyer had stated: "If more troops had been at hand the casualties would have been greater in proportion."



and Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Congress for the year, to visit Quetta after the great earthquake.<sup>3</sup> That refusal, a trivial enough affair, was yet most revealing of the mentality of the government. Inevitably, one thought of the contrast when last year, in connection with another great earthquake, Gandhiji had offered, on behalf of the committee of which Rajendra Babu was the honoured head, whole-hearted and 'respectful' cooperation to the government.<sup>4</sup> That cooperation was worth having as Rajendra Prasad's committee had almost as big a fund at its disposal as the government, with all its resources in India and England, had managed to collect; even more it was valuable because of the fine village organization of workers behind Rajendra Babu and his colleagues. It is also worth remembering that this cooperation was offered even though in theory civil disobedience of a kind continued and many prominent Congressmen were in prison.

That contrast was marked. But even apart from that the obvious course for any sensible government would have been to invite the cooperation of Rajendra Prasad after the fine work he did in the Behar earthquake and the great experience he gained thereby. There must be very few persons in India today who can rival him in knowledge of earthquake relief work. In all probability he knows far more of the subject than all the members of the Governor-General's Executive Council and their various secretaries taken together.

Another equally obvious thing to do, in order to gain public support and cooperation, was to take a number of public men and newspapermen into the government's confidence, give them full facilities to visit the earthquake area, and discuss the situation frankly with them. This would not have tied the hands of government in any way and it is absurd to say that some additional arrivals in the affected area would have upset the food situation or the sanitary measures that were being taken. Such newcomers would have made their own food arrangements and if they risked catching an infectious disease that was their look out. It was not a question of crowds of outsiders rolling in and interfering with all arrangements.

3. The city of Quetta was sealed under military guard on 2 June 1935, and the request of Mahatma Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad for permission to visit Quetta and conduct relief operations was rejected. The Quetta Central Relief Committee formed under the presidency of Rajendra Prasad had to restrict its assistance to helping refugees in Sind, the Punjab and the North West Frontier Province.
4. Mahatma Gandhi visited the afflicted towns and villages and helped the newly formed Bihar Central Relief Committee to draw up its plan of work.



But our benign government has an astonishing knack of doing the wrong thing, and even on the rare occasions when it does the right thing it does it in a wrong way. And then it is painfully surprised when it finds that the purity of its motives is suspected and cheering crowds do not welcome its efforts with enthusiasm.

This makes a man unsocial, impolite;  
Odious when wrong, and insolent if right.

There was no room for Gandhiji or Rajendra Babu or other popular leaders and well-known relief workers in Quetta but boy scouts could be sent without danger of their catching disease or lessening the stock of food. If Gandhiji had gone, there might indeed have been a shortage of goat's milk and dates.

Quetta became one of the battle-fronts, enveloped as it were in the fog of war, a no-man's land which was cut off from the rest of the country. The official megaphone boomed out its version of the news to us and told us of the wonders that were being performed by the official agency alone and unaided by others.

I am the blessed Glendoveer,  
'Tis mine to speak and yours to hear.

True there were also the Simla correspondents of certain favoured newspapers, those wise and clever mortals who are not like unto other men, and who can even glimpse, as through a glass darkly, the mysterious workings of the godlike mind of the Government of India.<sup>5</sup>

It was not unnatural or unexpected that these arrangements should meet with the disapproval of less favoured newspapermen and others. Nor was it at all surprising that they should, under the circumstances, give credence and publicity to vague rumours, many of them exaggerated or even unfounded. That was very wrong of course, but human nature is weak and it is not possible for all of us to live up to the high and noble standards set in Simla or New Delhi. Exclude a newspaperman and you make him suspicious and capable of believing almost anything. Two or three years ago the Soviet Government prevented all newspapermen from going to the Caucasus. The journalists scented trouble, something that the Soviets wanted to hide. It was a huge famine, said some; others inclined to the view that a nationalist rebellion had broken out in Georgia and parts of the Ukraine. The argument is still going on and it is by no means clear what took place then in those forbidden regions. Most people very rightly imagine that something not

5. *The Statesman* of 2 July 1935 reported that rescue work "was completed with the incomparable efficiency and expedition of the army in India."



creditable to the Soviet Government must have occurred, else why this hush-hush policy? And the Soviets can hardly complain if rumours and exaggerated accounts are believed.

So also a number of Indian newspapers, excited and displeased at the official attitude about Quetta, gave publicity to such scraps of news as rumour brought them. And then the Press Act and various emergency measures descended heavily on these hapless papers with their forfeits and securities.<sup>6</sup> A large sum of money went from the newspapers to the provincial governments. The majesty of the government had been vindicated. Truth had prevailed, as it was bound to in the end, and the serpent of falsehood had been crushed by the swift action of various magistrates and governors and the like.

I have absolutely no idea what these items of news or comments were to which government objected. It really does not much matter what they were and I am prepared to assume that they were thoroughly objectionable. What seems to me much more important is the extraordinary attitude of the government throughout this Quetta business. They took one false step after another—perhaps each subsequent step was made inevitable by the previous one—and made a horrid mess of a simple business. Who could have thought that even an earthquake could be bungled in this manner? And it is this bungling that reveals as in a flash that curious compound of conceit, ideas of prestige, intolerance, a certain cleverness, distrust, fear and stupidity which go to make up the mind of the Government of India.

I do not mean that the actual relief work in Quetta was bungled. I have no knowledge of that but I am inclined to think that official agency, even when efficient, lacks the human touch and is often wasteful. I imagine that the addition of non-officials to the workers, especially in the villages round about Quetta city, would have gone a long way to supply this human touch. Personally I am not a believer even in the efficiency of official processes. But as the relief work was in charge of the military it was probably far more efficient than the civil side of government would have been.

It was indeed fortunate for Quetta that a large force of military was stationed there and they could immediately start relief operations. Disciplined soldiers are the best workers in such an emergency, especially in the early days. In any event the British and Indian soldiers would have

6. The government proceeded against four newspapers, viz., *Free Press Journal*, *Bombay Standard*, *Tej* and *Quami Gazette*, under the Press Emergency Powers Act for publishing articles criticising their Quetta policy.



worked hard and earnestly at the task; the fact that their own comrades had perished in the catastrophe must have added to their zeal. Unfortunately, but very naturally, the army is not popular with the people. It is looked upon as something foreign, meant and used from time to time to keep them down. The Indian soldiers are definitely mercenary, the British troops foreigners, wholly ignorant of the land they are serving in, and both of them are looked upon with fear and dislike by the people; specially is the Tommy, the *gora*, the object of this distrust. There are no points of contact between him and the people and there are numerous barriers separating them. Even our B.A.s and M.A.s, on the rare occasions when they meet Tommies, find it difficult to get over the language difficulty. Their training in Shakespeare and Milton has not qualified them to understand the cockney speech or the broad Lancashire and Yorkshire dialect or English as she is spoken across the Tweed.

This gulf and the fear and distrust of the military are unfortunate. The Indian soldier is very much the peasant we know with a thin veneer of soldiering over him; the British Tommy is a very simple and likeable creature, rather shy and afraid of himself in strange surroundings, but always willing to expand and grow friendly if approached in the right way. The two, with the discipline and organization behind them, were ideal workers in the earthquake area and it was well that they were utilised immediately. But however good they might have been, they could not supply all the human needs of the people, nor could they easily get rid of the distrust which had long been associated with them.

It seems to me that it was also very proper on the part of the government to regulate the entry of people into the earthquake area. Large numbers of odd people, bent on doing relief work after their own fashion, might easily have created confusion and hindered work rather than helped it. But to regulate entry is one thing, to close and seal the area as if it was a theatre of war, is quite another. I do not know if any military considerations prompted this secretive policy, for the frontier is not far from Quetta. But no considerations could possibly justify the deliberate and offensive exclusion of noted public men who were offering their services in a spirit of cooperation. It is quite inconceivable that any such attitude could have been taken up in any other country that is supposed to be civilized. Only a government arrogantly irresponsible to popular feeling could have acted in this way.

Why did the Government of India act in this manner, I wondered, for whatever its actions might be, it has to bow down to some extent to the spirit of the times, and to talk of cooperation and the like. The



only answer I could find was that the government had Gandhi and the Congress on the brain. It is not for me to object to this obsession of theirs; I think they have some justification for it. But it seems to lead them into curious corners. A psychologist would probably give a satisfactory explanation of this by reference to some complex. Gandhi and the Congress are both nuisances; therefore let us ignore them, sit on them. If our superiority is not sufficiently recognized, let us proclaim it ourselves and compel people to listen to us; let us collect chits emphasizing this superiority and praising our good work. If we are not tall enough, let us stand on tip-toe; people will surely be impressed.

Perhaps it is some such unconscious functioning of the mind that forms the background of much that the government does. The old desire to keep up prestige means in the end some kind of attempt to stand on one's toes, in the vain hope of adding to one's size. But this is hardly a dignified procedure and seldom deceives. Often it has the opposite effect.

So it was in this Quetta business. The attempt of the government to snub Gandhi and the Congress resulted in the government being shown up for what it was, through its hurried attempts to justify itself, and its unseemly anger at its critics. The Congress and Gandhi did rather well. There was dignity in their attitude; there was no shouting, no outward anger, no official remonstrance even.

Our high officers of government move about with pomp and circumstance, their surroundings impress us, their gilded liveries of office dazzle us, they address us from time to time in stately, if somewhat trite, phrases pointing out the error of our ways. They cultivate the calm, and dignified demeanour of the great.

They think that dignity of soul may come,  
Perchance, with dignity of body.

Perhaps it helps a little. But even dignity of body is not very evident when one is standing on one's toes.

## 9. The Solidarity of Islam<sup>1</sup>

Some time back I read with great interest an article by Sir Mohammad Iqbal on the *Solidarity of Islam*.<sup>2</sup> Sir Mohammad's writings always attract me, for they give me some insight into a world which I find difficult to understand. So far as religion and the religious outlook are concerned, I live in the outer darkness, but, in spite of this deficiency in me, I am sufficiently interested in the historical, cultural and even the philosophical aspects of religion.

In his article Sir Mohammad dealt with the issue created between the *Qadianis* and the orthodox Muslims and considered this as 'extremely important' and affecting the integrity of the parent community. The *Qadianis*, according to him, had discarded the basic idea of Islam—the finality of prophethood—and had reverted to some extent to early Judaism and the pre-Islamic Magian culture. He was therefore of opinion that this 'rebellious group' should not be allowed to carry on its subversive propaganda, and, in any event, should not be permitted to masquerade as Muslims. *Qadiani* leaders did not accept Sir Mohammad's argument and vigorously repelled some of his statements.

Sir Mohammad's article raises a host of issues and makes one furiously to think in many directions. I hope that he will develop some of his points in future writings, for they deserve a full discussion. For the moment I am concerned with one aspect of his argument only. It would be impertinent of me to discuss the validity or otherwise of this argument from the point of view of Islam. That is a matter for erudite Muslims. For me Sir Mohammad is an authority on Islam worthy of respect and I must assume that he represents the orthodox viewpoint correctly.

If that is so, I presume that Turkey under the Ataturk Kemal has certainly ceased to be an Islamic country in any sense of the word. Egypt has been powerfully influenced by religious reformers who have tried to put new garments on the ancient truths, and, I imagine, that Sir Mohammad does not approve of this modernist tendency. The

1. Almora District Jail, 20 August 1935. Published in *Modern Review*, November 1935, pp. 504-505.
2. Iqbal published in 1934 the article called *Qadianis and the Orthodox Muslim*. The religious movement of *Qadianism* was started in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmed who claimed to be the "promised Prophet of every nation".



Arabs of Syria and Palestine more or less follow Egyptian thought-currents and are partly influenced by Turkey's example. Iran is definitely looking for its cultural inspiration to pre-Islamic Magian days. In all these countries, indeed in every country of western and middle Asia, nationalist ideas are rapidly growing, usually at the expense of the pure and orthodox religious outlook. Islam, as Sir Mohammad tells us, repudiates the race idea (and of course the geographical idea) and founds itself on the religious idea alone. But in the Islamic countries of western Asia we find today the race and geographical ideas all-powerful. The Turk takes pride in the Turanian race; the Iranian in his own ancient racial traditions; the Egyptian and Syrian (as well as the people of Palestine, Trans-Jordan and Iraq) dream of Arab unity in which the Muslim and Christian Arabs will share.

All this clearly shows that these nations have fallen away from the ideal of Islamic solidarity which Sir Mohammad lays down. Where then does this solidarity exist at present? Not in Central Asia, for in the Soviet parts the breakaway from orthodoxy is far greater; in the Chinese parts the predominant currents are probably nationalist (Turanian) and Soviet. Afghanistan and Arabia proper remain in Asia, and then there are a number of Islamic countries in North Africa, apart from Egypt. How far this orthodox outlook of religious solidarity is prevalent there, I do not know, but reports indicate that nationalistic ideas have penetrated even there. And nationalism and the solidarity of Islam do not fit in side by side. Each weakens the other.

From Sir Mohammad's viewpoint this situation in the Islamic world must be a deplorable one. The question of the *Qadianis*, important as he considers it, sinks into relative insignificance before these world happenings. He stresses the need of a real leader to rise in the Punjab apparently to combat the '*Qadiani* menace'. But what lead does he give in regard to the wider menace? The Aga Khan, we are told, is the leader of Indian Muslims. Does he stand for this solidarity of Islam as defined by Sir Mohammad Iqbal?

These questions are relevant even for a non-Muslim; for on the answer to them depends the political, social and economic orientation of Indian Muslims and their reactions to modern ideas and thought-currents, in which some of us are interested. Islam being a world community, its policy must also be a world policy if it is to preserve that sense of solidarity. Sir Mohammad should give us some hint of this policy to meet the nationalist, social and economic problems that confront each country and group.

The only hint he gives in the article is a negative one: that religious reformers should be put down. In this, he tells us, he cordially agrees with the orthodox Hindus, and religious reform is supposed to include all social reform. He makes a provisional suggestion also that the distinction of rural and urban Muslims be abolished, as this interferes with the unity of Islam in the Punjab. Presumably the fact that some Muslims cultivate the fields, some are big landlords and live on rent, some are professional people living in cities, or bankers, or artisans or captains of industry, or labourers, some have an abundance of good things of life while most others starve, will still remain and will not interfere with Islamic unity.

Perhaps it is the object of the recently-formed "Council of Peers and Moslem Leaders", of which Sir Mohammad Iqbal is a member, to further this unity and the solidarity of Islam. To an outsider it seems a little odd that Christian members of the British House of Lords should be so interested in the progress and solidarity of Islam. But at the lunch at Claridge's in London that followed the formation of this Council, the Aga Khan, we are told, "developed the theme of Anglo-Moslem unity." Perhaps the two unities lead into one another, and build up a wider and more embracing unity. It is all very confusing. I wish Sir Mohammad would explain and enlighten us.

## 10. His Highness the Aga Khan<sup>1</sup>

Sir Mohammad Iqbal's earnest plea for the solidarity of Islam and his protest against fissiparous tendencies led me to wonder as to where the line should be drawn. His Highness the Aga Khan is today considered the outstanding leader of the Indian Muslims. The government treats him and honours him as such, orthodox Muslim leaders, whenever in trouble or faced with difficulty, seek refuge under his sheltering wings. Even Sir Mohammad might, so to speak, be said to march under his political banner. From the point of view of orthodox Islam and its unity of conception, politics, sociology and economics can hardly be separated from religion. One would think therefore that the Aga

1. Almora District Jail, 21 August 1935. Published in *Modern Review*, November 1935, pp. 505-507.



Khan was the ideal representative of this unity and solidarity of religious belief.

Whether this is so I do not know and I should welcome wiser people to inform me. I have long had a vague kind of idea, however, that he hardly belongs to the inner orthodox fold, and I have admired him for the truly wonderful way in which he manages to combine, and gracefully carry in his own person, the most contradictory qualities, and to take part in multifarious activities which appear to be mutually antagonistic and irreconcilable. He is the head and spiritual leader of a widespread and wealthy sect and, I am told, that almost divine attributes are assigned to him by his devoted followers. He is said to derive a vast ecclesiastical revenue from the faithful, and one of his sources of income is supposed to be the granting of spiritual favours and indulgences. It is interesting to find these old-world practices being continued today in an intensive form. But the really remarkable fact is that the spiritual head who supports and encourages these practices is a modern of moderns, highly cultured in western ways, a prince of the turf, most at home in London and Paris. Only a remarkable personality could successfully carry this double burden. The Aga Khan not only does so with supreme ease, but he adds to it many public and political activities as well as the leadership of the Indian Muslims. That is an astonishing feat which, even though one may disagree with the Aga Khan, fills one with admiration for him.

But the question that is troubling me, as a result of reading Sir Mohammad Iqbal's statement on the solidarity of Islam, is how all this fits in with that solidarity. It may be perfectly justifiable to spend the money of the faithful on racing; that, after all, is a minor matter. But is the Aga Khan's sect a partner in that Islamic solidarity or not? I remember reading long ago Mark Twain's account of a visit paid by the Aga Khan to him in Bombay. Mark Twain's Indian servant burst into his hotel room one day in a state of extreme excitement and announced that God had come to pay a call on him. Many pray to God daily—and Mark Twain was a religious type of man—and each one of us, according to his early teaching or mental and spiritual development, has his own conception of God. But the best of us are apt to be taken aback by a sudden visitation of the Almighty. Mark Twain, after he had recovered from his initial surprise, discovered that God had come to him in the handsome and corporeal shape of the Aga Khan.

This characterization of the Aga Khan as God was no doubt a foolish error of Mark Twain's servant—and the Aga Khan cannot be held responsible for it. So far as I know, he does not claim divinity. But



there seem to be a large number of foolish persons about who ascribe certain divine or semi-divine attributes to him. Some of the propagandists of the sect describe him as an avatar or incarnation of the divinity. They have every right to do so if they believe in it. I have absolutely no complaint. But how does all this fit in with the solidarity of Islam?

A story that has long fascinated me is the account of the Aga Khan giving chits or notes of introduction for the archangel Gabriel to his followers, or some of them. This, so the tale runs, is to ensure their comfort and happiness in the next world. I cannot vouch for the truth of this story, but I do hope that it is based on fact. There is little of romance left in this drab and dreary world, and to correspond with an archangel is a captivating idea. It seems to bring heaven nearer, and even our life here down below assumes a rosier hue.

Then there is another story, not so attractive, but nevertheless extraordinary enough. I had heard of it previously and lately I read an account in a book by an American traveller. Colonel E. Alexander Powell, in his *The Last Home of Mystery*, referring to the Aga Khan says:

His sanctity is so great, indeed, in the eyes of his followers, that the water in which he bathes is carefully conserved and sold annually to the representatives of the various Mohammedan sects at a ceremony held once each year at Aga Khan Hall in Bombay. The price paid for this holy water is the Aga Khan's weight in gold, the scales used for the weighing ceremony being adjusted to the fraction of an ounce troy. As the Aga Khan is a plump little man, the price paid for his used bath water is a high one.

Colonel Powell has probably added some journalistic and fancy touches of his own to this account. But the story is an old and oft-repeated one and, to my knowledge, has never been contradicted. If the Aga Khan can find a profitable use for his bath water and at the same time serve and exalt faith, surely it is no one's business to object. Tastes differ and it takes all sorts to make this world of ours. But again I am led to wonder if all this furthers the solidarity and 'democracy of Islam'.

Another incident comes to my mind. It was after the War when Kemal Pasha had driven out the Greeks and established himself firmly in power in Turkey. His casual treatment of the new Caliph, appointed by him, drew forth a protest<sup>2</sup>—a very polite protest—from the Aga

2. Along with Sayeed Amir Ali, the Aga Khan wrote a letter to Ismet Pasha, Prime Minister of Turkey, protesting against the threatened attacks on the powers of the Caliph. The letter was condemned as British propaganda.



Khan and Mr. Amir Ali.<sup>3</sup> Kemal Pasha scented an English conspiracy and suddenly started a fierce attack on England, the Aga Khan, the Caliph and some Constantinople journalists. He was not very polite to the Aga Khan and drew all manner of unjust inferences from his long and intimate association with the British Government and the ruling classes. He pointed out that the Aga Khan had not been keen on following the previous Caliph's religious mandate when war had broken out between Turkey and England. He even stressed that the Aga Khan was no true Muslim, or at any rate, not an orthodox one, for did he not belong to a heretical sect? All this and much more he said, keen on gaining his end, which was to discredit the Aga Khan and make him out to be an accomplice of British foreign policy. And making the Aga Khan's move a pretext, the Ataturk put an end to the ancient Khilafat.

Kemal Pasha can hardly be said to be an authority on Islam, for he has deliberately broken away from many of its tenets. His motives were purely political, but his criticisms were not wholly without apparent force.

As I write this, another aspect of the Aga Khan's many-sided personality comes up before me. It is given in an intimate, every day account and is thus all the more valuable and revealing. It appears in the *London Bystander* and I have come across it in a quotation in the *New Statesman*. This tells us that,

Although the Aga Khan loves the good things of life—he is a great gourmet and has his own cook—there is a very considerable spiritual side to his life. It is hard to pin him down exactly on this point. But he will admit to a strong feeling of the battle between good and evil. At any rate, he is a wonderfully good sportsman, and when Jack Joel offered him a blank cheque the other day for Bahram he refused because he said he wanted in his decrepit old age to be wheeled alongside his Derby winner and say, 'Well, that was a jolly day!'

Much to my regret I have never met the Aga Khan. Only once have I seen him. This was in the early noncooperation days at a Khilafat meeting in Bombay, where I sat not far from him on the platform. But this glimpse of an attractive and remarkable personality was hardly satisfying, and I have often wanted to find out what curious quality he possesses which enables him to fill with distinction so many and such varied roles, combining the thirteenth century with the

3. (1849-1928); member, Bengal Legislative Council, 1878; judge, Calcutta High Court, 1890; appointed to the judicial committee of the Privy Council, 1909.

twentieth, Mecca and Newmarket, this world and the next, spirituality and racing, politics and pleasure. Wide indeed must be the range of Islam to include all this in its unity and solidarity.

But looking at Sir Mohammad Iqbal's statement I am again led to doubt, for Sir Mohammad seems to have little love for the non-conformists. He believes in the straight and narrow path of true orthodoxy and those who stray from this must forthwith remove themselves from his ken. How then am I to remove this doubt and difficulty? Will Sir Mohammad help in solving the riddle?

## 11. Orthodox of All Religions, Unite!

Some years ago I happened to be in Benares and as I was driving through the narrow city streets, my car was held up by a crowd. A procession was passing through and, apart from the processionists, there were many sightseers and little boys intent on sharing in the fun. Crowds interest me and I got down from the car to find out what was afoot. The procession was certainly an interesting one and it had certain unique features. We saw Brahmans, the most orthodox of their kind, with all manner of caste-marks proudly displayed on their foreheads, marching shoulder to shoulder with bearded *moulvies*; the priests from the *ghats* fraternized with the *mullahs* from the mosques, and one of the standards they carried in triumph bore the flaming device: 'Hindu Mussalman *Ekta Ki Jai*'—Victory to Hindu-Muslim Unity! Very gratifying, we thought. But still what was all this about?

We soon found out from their cries and the many other standards they carried. This was a joint protest by the orthodox of both religions against the Sarda Act (or perhaps it was a Bill at the time) which prohibited marriages of girls under fourteen. The pious and the holy of both faiths had joined ranks and hands to declare that they would not submit to this outrage on their deepest convictions and most cherished rights. Were they going to be bullied by the threats of so-called reformers into giving up their right to marry child-wives?

1. Almora District Jail, 23 August 1935. Published in *Modern Review*, December 1935, pp. 625-631.



Never! Law or no law they would continue to marry little immature girls—for was not post-puberty marriage a sin?—and thus enhance the glory of religion. Had not a noted *Vaidya* (physician) of Benares stated that in order to proclaim his adherence to the ancient *dharma* and his abhorrence of new-fangled notions like the Sarda Act, he, even he, although he was round about sixty years of age, would marry afresh a girl under the prescribed legal age? Faith and religion had built up their great structures on the sacrifice of their votaries. Surely the movement against the Sarda Act would not lack its martyrs.

We mixed with the crowd and marched along for some distance the side of the procession. Devadas Gandhi was with me and some Benares friends and soon we were recognized by the processionists. They did not welcome us or shower greetings on us, and I am afraid we did not encourage them to do so. Our looks and attire separated us from the ranks of the faithful—we had neither beards nor caste-marks—and we carried on an irreverent and somewhat aggressive commentary on the procession and its sponsors. Offensive slogans were hurled at us and there was some jostling about. Just then the procession arrived at the Town Hall and for some reason or other started stone throwing. A bright young person thereupon pulled some crackers and this had an extraordinary effect on the serried ranks of the orthodox. Evidently thinking that the police or the military had opened fire, they dispersed and vanished with exceeding rapidity. A few crackers were enough to put the procession to flight, but not even a cracker was required to make the British Government in India surrender on this issue. A little shouting, in which oddly enough the Muslims took the leading share, was enough to kill and bury the Sarda Act. It was feeble enough at birth with all manner of provisions which hindered its enforcement and then it gave six months' grace which resulted in a very spate of child marriages. And then, after the six months were over? Nothing happened; child marriages continued as before and government and magistrates looked the other way while the Sarda Act was torn to shreds and cast to the dogs. In some instances the person who ventured to bring a breach to a court, himself got into trouble for his pains and was fined. True, in one instance a Punjab villager who had given his ten-year daughter in marriage and deliberately broken the provisions of the Sarda Act despite warning was sentenced to one month's imprisonment. But this error on the part of the magistrate was soon rectified by the Punjab Government who hastened to send a telegram ordering the release of the offender against the Act. (This case has been taken from Miss E.F. Rathbone's interesting little book, *Child Marriage*.)



What were we doing all this time? We were in prison. For six years now we have been mostly in prison, sometimes as many as sixty or seventy thousand at a time. Outside, a strict censorship prevailed, meetings were forbidden and an attempt to enter a rural area was almost certain to lead to prison, if not worse. The various emergency laws and denial of civil liberties were certainly not aimed at preventing support of the Sarda Act. But in effect they left the field clear to the opponents of that measure. And the government in its distress at having to combat a great political movement directed against it, sought allies in the most reactionary of religious and social bigots. To obtain their goodwill the Sarda Act was sat upon, extinguished. 'Hindu Mussalman Ekta Ki Jai'—Victory to Hindu-Muslim Unity!

The Muslims deserve their full share in this victory. Most of us had thought that the child-wife evil was largely confined to Hindus. But whatever the early disproportion might have been, Muslims were evidently determined not to be out-distanced in this matter as in others, by Hindus. So while on the one hand they claimed more seats in the councils, more jobs as policemen, deputy collectors, tahsildars, *chaprasis* and the like, they hurried on with the work of increasing their child-wives. From the most noted taluqdars in Oudh to the humble workers, they all joined in this endeavour, till at last the 1931 census proclaimed that victory had come to them. The report of the Age of Consent Committee<sup>2</sup> had previously prepared us to revise our previous opinion but the census went much further than had been expected. It told us that Muslims had actually surpassed the Hindus in the proportion of their child-wives. In Assam "Muslims have now far the largest proportion of child-wives in all the early age groups;" in Behar and Orissa the census tells us that "whereas the proportion of Hindu girl-wives (including widows) below the age of ten has increased since 1921 from 105 to 160, among Muslims it has increased from 76 to 202." Truly a triumph for the Sarda Act and the government that is supposed to enforce it.

Lest it be said that our enlightened Indian states lag behind on this issue, the Government of Mysore has recently made its position clear. A venturesome member sought to introduce a Child Marriage Restraint Bill, on the lines of the Sarda Act, in the Mysore Council. The motion was stoutly opposed by a Dewan Bahadur on behalf of the Muslims. The government generously permitted the official members to vote as they liked, but, oddly enough, the entire official bloc, including two

2. The Age of Consent Committee was appointed by the Government of India on 25 June 1928 and its report was published on 26 August 1929.



European members, voted against the motion and with their votes helped to defeat it. Religion was again saved.

This instance of the Sarda Act was a revealing one, for it showed that all the shouting about Hindu-Muslim friction and disunity was exaggerated and, in any event, misdirected. That there was such friction nobody could deny, but it was the outcome not so much of religious differences as of economic distress, unemployment, and a race for jobs, which put on a sanctified garb and in the name of religion deluded and excited the masses. If the difference had been essentially religious, one would have thought that the orthodox of the two faiths would be the farthest removed from each other and the most hostile to each other's pretensions. As a matter of fact they combine frequently enough to combat any movement of reform, social, economic, political. Both look upon the person who wants to change the existing order in any way as the real enemy; both cling desperately and rather pathetically to the British Government, for instinctively they realise that they are in the same boat with it.

Nearly twenty two years ago, before the War, in January, 1914, the Aga Khan wrote an article in the *Edinburgh Review* on the Indian situation. He advised the government to abandon the policy of separating Hindus from Muslims and to rally the moderate of both creeds in a common camp so as to provide a counterpoise to the radical nationalist tendencies of young India, both Hindu and Muslim. In those days extremism was confined to nationalism and did not go beyond the political plane. Even so the Aga Khan sensed that the vital division lay not along religious lines but along political—between those who more or less stood for British domination in India and others who desired to end it. That nationalist issue still dominates the field and is likely to do so as long as India remains politically unfree. But today other issues have also assumed prominence—social and economic. If radical political change was feared by the moderate and socially backward elements, much more are they terrified by the prospect of social and economic change. Indeed it is the fear of the latter that has reacted on the political issue and made many a so-called advanced politician retrace his steps. He has in some cases become frankly a reactionary in politics, or a camouflaged reactionary like the communalists, or an open champion of his class interests and vested rights, like the big zamindars and taluqdars and industrialists.

I have no doubt that this process will continue and will lead to the toning down of communal and religious animosities, to Hindu-Muslim unity, of a kind. The communalists of various groups, in spite of their mutual hostility, will embrace each other like long-lost brothers and



swear fealty in a new joint campaign against those who are out for radical change, politically or socially or economically. The new alignment will be a healthier one and the issues will be clearer. The indications towards some such grouping are already visible, though they will take some time to develop.

Sir Mohammad Iqbal, the champion of the solidarity of Islam, is in cordial agreement with orthodox Hindus in some of their most reactionary demands. He writes: "I very much appreciate the orthodox Hindus' demand for protection against religious reformers in the new constitution. Indeed this demand ought to have been first made by the Muslims." He further explains that "the encouragement in India of religious adventurers on the ground of modern liberalism tends to make people more and more indifferent to religion and will eventually completely eliminate the important factor of religion from the life of the Indian community. The Indian mind will then seek some other substitute for religion which is likely to be nothing less than the form of atheistic materialism which has appeared in Russia."

This fear of communism has driven many liberals and other middle groups in Europe to fascism and reaction. Even the old enemies, the Jesuits and the Freemasons, have covered up their bitter hostility of two hundred years to face the common enemy. In India communism and socialism are understood by relatively very few persons and most people who shout loudest against them are supremely ignorant about them. But they are influenced partly instinctively because of their vested interests, and partly because of the propaganda on the part of the government, which always stresses the religious issue.

Sir Mohammad Iqbal's argument, however, takes us very much further than merely anti-communism or anti-socialism and it is worthwhile examining it in some detail. His position, on this issue of suppression of all reformers, is, it should be remembered, almost the same as that of the *sanatanist* Hindus. And even a party which presumes to call itself democratic or nationalist (or perhaps some other name—it is difficult to keep pace with the periodic transformations of half a dozen worthy gentlemen in western India)—declared recently in its programme that it was opposed to all legislative interference<sup>3</sup> with religious rights and customs. In India this covers a wide field and there are few departments of life which cannot be connected with religion. Not to interfere with them legislatively is a mild way of saying that

3. The Democratic Swaraj Party, at a meeting held at Akola on 1 August 1935, passed a resolution advocating a policy "of non-interference by legislatures in religious matters."



the orthodox may continue in every way as before and no changes will be permitted.

Sir Mohammad would go further, for Islam, according to him, does not believe in tolerance. Its solidarity consists in a certain uniformity which does not permit any heresy or non-conformity within the fold. Hinduism is utterly different because in spite of a common culture and outlook, it lacks uniformity and for thousands of years has actually encouraged the formation of innumerable sects. It is difficult to define heresy when almost every conceivable variation of the central theme is held by some sect. This outlook of Islam is probably comparable to that of the Roman Catholic Church. Both think in terms of a world community owing allegiance to one definite doctrine and are not prepared to tolerate any deviation from it. A person belonging to an entirely different religion is preferable to a heretic, for a heretic creates confusion in the minds of true believers. Therefore a heretic must be shown no quarter and his ideas must be suppressed. That essentially has always been and still is the belief of the Catholic church, but its practice has been toned down to meet modern 'liberal' notions. When the practice fitted in with the theory it led to the Spanish Inquisition, the *autos da fe*, and various crusades and wars against Christian non-conformists in Europe. The Inquisition has a bad odour now and we shiver to think of its cruelties. Yet it was carried on by high-minded, deeply religious men who never thought of personal gain. They believed with all the intensity of religious conviction that the heretic would go to hell if he persisted in his error, and with all their might they sought to save his immortal soul from the eternal pit. What did it matter if in this attempt the body was made to suffer?

## 12. The Mind of a Judge<sup>1</sup>

The days when I practised at the bar as a lawyer seem distant and far off, and I find it a little difficult now to recapture the thoughts and moods that must have possessed me then. And yet it was only sixteen years ago that I walked out of the web of the law in more ways than

1. Almora District Jail, 1 September 1935. Published in *Modern Review*, January 1936, pp. 8-12. Reprinted in *India and the World*, pp 130-145.

one. Sometimes I look back on those days, for in prison one grows retrospective and, as the present is dull and monotonous and full of unhappiness, the past stands out, vivid and inviting. There was little that was inviting in that legal past of mine and at no time have I felt the urge to revert to it. But still my mind played with the ifs and possibilities of that past—a foolish but an entertaining pastime when inaction is thrust on one—and I wondered how life would have treated me if I had stuck to my original profession. That was not an unlikely contingency, though it seems odd enough now; a slight twist in the thread of life might have changed my whole future. I suppose I would have done tolerably well at the bar and I would have had a much more peaceful, a duller, and physically a more comfortable existence than I have so far had. Perhaps I might even have developed into a highly respectable and solemn-looking judge with wig and gown, as quite a number of my old friends and colleagues have done.

How would I have felt as a judge, I have wondered? How does a judge feel or think? This second question used to occupy my mind to some extent even when I was in practice conducting or watching criminal cases, lost in wonder at the speed and apparent unconcern with which the judge sent men to the scaffold or long terms of imprisonment. That question, in a more personal form, has always faced me when I have stood in the prisoner's dock and awaited sentence, or attended a friend's trial for political offences. That question is almost always with me in prison, surrounded as I am with hundreds or thousands of persons whom judges have sent there. (I am not concerned for the moment with political offenders; I am only referring to the ordinary prisoners.) The judge had considered the evil deed that was done and he had meted out justice and punishment as he had been told to do by the penal code. Sometimes he had added a sermon of his own, probably to justify a particularly heavy sentence. He had not given a thought to the upbringing, environment, education (or want of it) of the prisoner before him. He had paid no heed to the psychological background that led to the deed, or to the mental conflict that had raged within that dumb, frightened creature who stands in the dock. He had no notion that perhaps society, of which he considers himself a pillar and an ornament, might be partly responsible for the crime that he is judging.

He is, let us presume, a conscientious judge and he weighs the evidence carefully before pronouncing sentence. He may even give the benefit of the doubt to the accused, though our judges are not given to doubting very much. But, almost invariably, the prisoner and he belong to different worlds with very little in common between them



and incapable of understanding each other. There may sometimes be an intellectual appreciation of the other's outlook and background, though that is rare enough; but there is no emotional awareness of it, and without the latter there can never be true understanding of another person.

Sentence follows, and these sentences are remarkable. As the realization comes that crime is not decreasing, and may even be increasing, the sentences become more savage in the hope that this may frighten the evil-doer. The judge and the power behind the judge have not grasped the fact that crime may be due to special reasons, which might be investigated, and that some of these may be capable of control; and further that in any event a harsh penal code does not improve the social morals of a group or a harsh sentence those of an individual who has lapsed from grace. The only remedy they know, both for political and non-political offences, is punishment and an attempt to terrorize the offender by what are called deterrent sentences. The usual political sentence now for a speech or a song or a poem which offends the government is two years rigorous imprisonment (in the Frontier Province it is three years), and a lavish use of this is being made from day to day; but even this seems trivial when compared with the cases of large numbers of those people who are kept confined for four or five years or more, indefinitely, without conviction or sentence.

Political cases, however, depend greatly on the moods of government and a changing situation, and do not help us in considering the ordinary administration of the criminal law. To some extent the two overlap and affect each other, for instance, many agrarian and labour cases in courts are often definitely political in origin. It is also well-known that many people, who are considered politically undesirable by the police, are proceeded against under the bad livelihood or similar sections of the code and clapped in prison as bad characters with no special offence being brought up against them. Ignoring such cases and considering what might be called the unadulterated crimes, two facts stand out: both the number of convictions and the length of sentences are growing. Every year the various provincial prison reports complain of the increasing number of prisoners and the necessity of additional accommodation. The peak years, when the civil disobedience movement sent its scores of thousands to prison, become the normal years even without this special influx of politicals. Occasionally the difficulty is overcome by discharging a few thousand short-timers before their time, but the strain continues.

The central prisons are full of 'lifers', prisoners sentenced for life, and others sentenced to long terms. Most of these 'lifers' come in



huge bunches in dacoity cases and probably a fair proportion are guilty, though I am inclined to think that many innocent persons are involved also, as the evidence is entirely one of identification. It is obvious that the growing number of dacoities are due to the increasing unemployment and poverty of the masses as well as the lower middle classes. Most of the other criminal offences involving property are also due to this terrible prospect of want and starvation that faces the vast majority of our people.

Do our judges ever realize this or give thought to the despair that the sight of a starving wife or children might produce even in a normal human being? Is a man to sit helplessly by and see his dear ones sicken and die for want of the simplest human necessities? He slips and offends against the law, and the law and the judge then see to it that he can never again become a normal person with a socially beneficial job of work. They help to produce the criminal type, so-called, and then are surprised to find that such types exist and multiply.

The major offences lead to a life sentence or ten years or so. But the petty offences and the way they are treated by judges are even more instructive. The vast majority of these are buried in court files and get no publicity; only rarely do the papers mention such a case. Three such cases, taken almost at random from recent issues of newspapers, are given below:

Rahman was an old offender with 12 previous convictions, the first of which dated back to 1913. The present offence was one of theft of clothes valued at a few rupees. Rahman pleaded guilty and requested the court to send him to a reformatory or some such place from where he could emerge thoroughly reformed. The judge, who was the Judicial Commissioner in Sind, refused this request and sentenced him to seven years, adding: "If this seven-year sentence of hard labour does not reform you, God alone must come to your aid." (Karachi, May 23, 1935).

Badri, who had four previous convictions, was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment under section 411/75 I.P.C. for having dishonestly received a stolen *chaddar* (cloth sheet). (Lucknow, July 3, 1935).

Ghulam Mohammad, an old offender, was sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment for stealing one rupee by picking the pocket of a man. (Sialkot, July 15, 1935).

These and similar sentences may be perfectly correct from the point of view of the Indian Penal Code but it does seem to me astonishing that any judge should imagine that by inflicting such sentences he is



reforming the offender. Evidently the Judicial Commissioner in Sind had himself some doubts about the efficacy of his treatment for he hinted that God might be given a chance on the next occasion.

There they sit, these judges, in their courts, and a procession of unfortunates passes before them—some go to the scaffold, some to be whipped, some to imprisonment, to which may be added solitary confinement. They are doing their duty according to their abstract ideas of justice and punishment; they must consider themselves as the protectors of society from anti-social criminal elements. Do their thoughts ever go beyond these set ideas and take human shape considering the miserable offender as a human being with parents, wife, children, friends? They punish the individual but at the same time they punish a group also, for the ripples of suffering spread out and go far. Those who have to die at least die swiftly, the agony is brief. But the agony is long for those who enter prison.

Behind the door, within the wall

Locked, they sit the numbered ones.

Two years, three years, seven years stolen from life's brief span—each year of twelve months, each month of thirty days, each day of twenty-four hours—how terribly long it all seems to the prisoner, how wearily time passes!

All this is very sad and deplorable no doubt, but what is the poor judge to do? Is he to wallow in a sea of sentimentality and give up sentencing offenders against the laws? If he is so soft and sensitive he is not much good as a judge and will have to give place to another. No, no one expects the judge to embrace every offender and invite him to dinner, but a human element in a trial and sentence would certainly improve matters. The judges are too impersonal, distant, and too little aware of the consequences of the sentences they award. If their awareness could be increased, as well as a sense of fellow-feeling with the prisoner, it would be a great gain. This can only come when the two belong to more or less the same class. A financier who has embezzled vast sums of public money will have every sympathy from the judge, not so the poor wretch who has picked up a rupee or stolen a sheet to satisfy an urgent need. For the judge and the average offender to belong to the same class means a fundamental change in social structure, as indeed every great reform does. But even apart from and in anticipation of that, something could certainly be done.

It was Bernard Shaw, I think, who suggested that every judge and magistrate, as well as every prison official, should spend a period in prison, living like ordinary prisoners. Only then would they be justified

in sentencing people to imprisonment, or to governing them there. The suggestion is an excellent one although it may be difficult to give effect to it. I ventured to suggest it once to the Home Member and the Inspector-General of Prisons of the U.P. Government for their personal adoption, but they did not seem to favour it. At least one well-known prison official, however, has adopted it. This was Thomas Mott Osborne of the famous Sing Sing Prison in New York. He trained himself by undergoing a term of voluntary imprisonment and, as a result of this, he introduced later on many remarkable improvements in the social rehabilitation and education of the prisoners.

Such a term of voluntary imprisonment will do a world of good to the bodies and souls of our judges, magistrates and prison officials. It will also give them a greater insight into prison life. But obviously no such voluntary effort can ever approach the real thing. The sting of imprisonment will be absent as well as the peculiarly helpless and broken feeling before the armed and walled power of the state, which a prisoner experiences. Nor will the voluntary prisoner ever have to face bad treatment from the staff. The essence of prison is a psychological background of having been cast off from society like a diseased limb. That will necessarily be absent. But with all these drawbacks the experience will be worthwhile and will help in making the administration of the criminal law more human and beneficial. The great invasions of our prisons by middle class people during the noncooperation and civil disobedience movements had indirectly a marked effect. As the prison-goers did not become judges or prison officials the direct effect was little. But a knowledge of prison conditions and a sympathy for the prisoner's lot became widespread, and public opinion and the crusading efforts of some Congressmen bore substantial results.

I do not know whether I am over-soft but I do not think I err on the mushy and sentimental side. Other people and even many of my close colleagues have considered me rather hard. Mr. C.R. Das once referred to me at a meeting of the All India Congress Committee as being 'cold-blooded'.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it all depends on the standard of comparison as well as on the fact that some display their emotions more than others. However that may be, I do hate the idea of punishment and especially 'deterrent' punishment and all the suffering, deliberately caused, that it evolves. Perhaps it cannot be done away with completely in this present-day world of ours, but it can certainly be minimized, toned down and almost humanized.

2. At the meeting held at Nagpur in July 1923.



At one time I was strongly opposed to the death penalty and, in theory, my opposition still continues. But I have come to realize that there are many things far worse than death, and if the choice had to be made, and I was given it, I would probably accept a death sentence rather than one of imprisonment for life. But I would not like to be hung; I would prefer being shot or guillotined or even electrocuted; most of all other methods I would like to be given, as Socrates was of old, the cup of poison which would send me to sleep from which there was no awakening. This last method seems to me to be far the most civilized and humane. But in India we favour hanging, and last year the official mind showed us the texture of which it was made by organizing public hangings in Karachi or somewhere else in Sind. This was meant to terrify would-be evil-doers. It turned out to be a huge *mela* where thousands gathered to witness the ghastly spectacle. I suppose the mentality behind such public exhibitions bears a family resemblance to that which prompted the *autos da fe* of the Spanish Inquisition.

A friend of mine who became a High Court Judge had a 'crisis of conscience' when he had first to sentence a man to death. The idea seemed hateful to him. He overcame his repugnance, however, (he had to or else he would not have long continued in his job) and I suppose he soon got used to sending people to the scaffold without turning a hair. He was an exception and I doubt if many others in his position have ever had such scruples. It is probably easier to sentence a man to death than to see the sentence carried out. And yet even sensitive people get used to this painful sight. A young English member of the Indian Civil Service had to attend hangings in the local gaol. At his first hanging, he told me, he was thoroughly sick and felt bad all day. But very soon the sight had no unusual effect on him whatever and he used to go straight from the execution to his breakfast table and have a hearty meal.

I have never seen a death sentence being carried out. In most of the gaols where I have lived as a prisoner executions did not take place, but on three or four occasions there were hangings in my gaol. These took place in a special enclosure, cut off from the rest of the prison, but the whole gaol population knew of it, perhaps because the unlocking of the various barracks and cells took place at a later hour on those mornings. I experienced a peculiar feeling on those days, an ominous stillness and a tendency for people to talk in low voices. It is possible that all this was the product of my own imagination.

And yet with all my repugnance for executions, I feel that some method of eliminating utterly undesirable human beings will have to

be adopted and used with discretion. The real objection to the infliction of capital punishment as well as other punishments is of course not so much the resultant suffering of the person punished, as the brutalization of the community that authorizes such punishment, and more particularly of the individuals who carry it out. This is especially noticeable in the case of whipping, which is widely prevalent in India. The official defence for the punishment of whipping is that it is meant for horrible crimes, like rape with violence. In practice it has a much wider range and in 1932 (as was stated in the British House of Commons) five hundred civil disobedience prisoners were whipped. This was the official figure, unofficial jail beatings not being included. These political prisoners were whipped either for purely political offences or for breaches of gaol discipline. No violence or crime was involved. It has now been laid down officially that in serious cases of hunger strikes in gaol whipping may be resorted to.<sup>3</sup> We thus have it that in the opinion of the British Government in India a hunger strike or breaches of gaol discipline stand on the same level as rape with violence.

Whipping is usually administered in prisons by some low-caste prisoner. No prisoner likes the job but he has little choice in the matter. The higher caste prisoners would in any event refuse to whip, and even the warders are reluctant to do so. A case came to my notice once when a warder was asked to whip. He refused absolutely and was punished for this contumacy. It is interesting to compare the sensitiveness to whipping of the prisoners and warders with that of our judges and prison officials who order it, and our government which authorizes and defends it.

I was reading the other day about the film censorship in Britain. It was stated that one of the grounds for censorship was the avoidance of cruelty scenes. In animal films no kill was to be shown. Films "showing pain or suffering on the part of an animal, whether such pain is caused by accident or intention", are not allowed as these are supposed to have a bad effect on spectators, especially children, and "undermine moral character."

We also in India have our film censorships and an active Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Unfortunately human beings are not included in the category of animals and so they cannot benefit by the activities of the Society. And our film censorship justifies itself by banning films dealing with "Quetta Earthquake Topical" or

3. On 21 December 1934 the Government of India permitted the Government of Bombay to sanction whipping of state prisoners for "continued recalcitrant conduct."



"National Congress Scenes" or "Departure of Mahatma Gandhi for the Round Table Conference" and similar dangerous topics.

Sentences of death and whipping impress us and pain us, but, after all, they affect only a very small number of the scores of thousands who are sentenced by our courts. The vast majority of these go to prison, mostly for long periods over which their punishment is spread out. It is a continuing torture, a never-ceasing pain, till mind itself grows dull and the body is blunted to sensation. The criminal type develops, the ugly fruit of our gaols and our criminal laws, and there is no fitting him in then with the social machine outside. He is the square peg everywhere, with no roots, no home, suspicious of everybody, being suspected everywhere, till at last he comes back to his only true resting-place, the prison, and takes up again the tin or iron bowl which is his faithful companion there. Do our judges ever trouble to think of cause and effect, of the inevitable consequences of an act or decision? Do they realize that their courts and the prisons are the principal factories for the production and stamping of the criminal type?

In prison one comes to realize more than anywhere else the basic nature of the state; it is the force, the compulsion, the violence of the governing group. "Government", George Washington is reported to have said, "is not reason, it is not eloquence—it is force! Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master." It is true that civilization has been built up on cooperation and forbearance and mutual collaboration in a thousand ways. But when a crisis comes and the state is afraid of some danger then the superstructure goes or, at any rate, is subordinated to the primary function of the state—self-protection by force and violence. The army, the police, the prison come into greater prominence then, and of the three the prison is perhaps the nakedest form of a state in miniature.

Must the state always be based on force and violence, or will the day come when this element of compulsion is reduced to a minimum and almost fades away? That day, if it ever comes, is still far off. Meanwhile, the violence of the governing group produces the violence of other groups that seek to oust it. It is a vicious circle, violence breeding violence, and on ethical grounds there is little to choose between the two violences. It always seems curious to me how the governing group in a state, basing itself on an extremity of violence, objects on moral or ethical grounds to the force or violence of others. On practical grounds of self-protection they have reason to object; but why drag in morality and ethics? State violence is preferable to private violence in many ways, for one major violence is far better than numerous petty private violences. State violence is also

likely to be a more or less ordered violence and thus preferable to the disorderly violence of private groups and individuals, for even in violence order is better than disorder, except that this makes the state more efficient in its violence and powers of compulsion. But when a state goes off the rails completely and begins to indulge in disorderly violence, then indeed it is a terrible thing, and no private or individual effort can compete with it in horror and brutality.

"You must live in a chaos if you would give birth to a dancing star", says Nietzsche. Must it be so? Is there no other way? The old difficulty of the humanist is ever cropping up, his disgust at force and violence and cruelty, and yet his inability to overcome these by merely standing by and looking on. That is the recurring theme of Ernst Toller's plays:

The sword, as ever, is a shift of fools  
To hide their folly.  
By force, the smoky torch of violence,  
We shall not find the way.

Yet force and violence reign triumphant today everywhere. Only in our country has a noble effort been made to combat them by means other than those of force. The inspiration of that effort, and of the leader who lifted us out of our petty selves by his matchless purity of outlook, still remains, though the ultimate outcome be shrouded in darkness.

But these are big questions beyond the power even of judges. We may not perhaps be able to find an answer to them in our time, or, finding an answer, be unable to impress it on wayward humanity. Meanwhile, the smaller questions and problems pursue us and we cannot ignore them. We come back to the job of the judge and the prison governor and we can say this, at least, with certainty: that the deliberate infliction of punishment or torture of the mind or body is not the way to reform anyone, that though this may break or twist the victim it will not mend him, that it is much more likely to brutalize and deform him who inflicts it. For the inevitable effect of cruelty and torture is to degrade both the sufferer and the person who causes the suffering.



## APPENDIX

1. To S. Subramaniam Iyengar

Madras  
20.11.20

Dear Mr. Subramaniam Iyengar,

May I send you from distant Switzerland my congratulations on your election to the Congress presidency? It is hardly an enviable office in these days of storm and internal conflict and yet I have a strong hope that during your year of office Indian affairs will take a turn for the better and the passions of communitarianism will gradually subside. My great regret is that I have not been in India during these months. I do not suppose I could have done much good to anybody but still it is good to be in a fight and to give and receive hearty blows. My sympathies during the present conflict are of course with the Swamijis and yet I cannot criticise my Indian friends even for their programme. I have to fall back on those largely because the other groups—the Reformists and the much attacked but absolutely pacifist party, the Independent Congress Party—are according to my thinking utterly in the wrong. I regret even more my inability to attend the Gandhi Congress. It will be the last Congress I shall miss for many years, excepting the sessions I could not attend when I was in jail.

The newspaper news that one gets here about Indian affairs is usually highly coloured and it is difficult to get at the true facts. I gather however that the Swamijis are doing well in the elections—in a few days probably the full results will be out. Indian papers make every reading and almost invariably make one feel depressed or angry. And yet after some months in Europe I have begun to feel far more optimistic about India's future than I have done for the last three years or more. Every country in Europe has problems quite as difficult as ours and in some cases far worse. Even the commercial trouble has its counterpart in religious differences and parties here. There is absolutely no chance of Europe settling down for many years to come and there is every probability of another big break-up within a few years. The League of Nations and all foreign policies and parts are really being used as a preparation for the coming conflict. England has managed to get hated all over the Continent and hardly anybody here has a good word to say for the diplomatic tradition is strong in England and they have still a knack of playing off their opponents against each other. Added to this they have the advantage of utilizing the undoubted fear of Bolshevism which exists in most European countries. It is generally

A. Subramaniam Iyengar Papers, MSS.M.1.





## 1. To S. Srinivasa Iyengar<sup>1</sup>

Montana  
20.11.26

Dear Mr Srinivasa Iyengar,

May I send you from distant Switzerland my congratulations on your election to the Congress presidentship? It is hardly an enviable office in these days of storm and internal conflict and yet I have a strong hope that during your year of office Indian affairs will take a turn for the better and the madness of communalism will gradually subside. My great regret is that I have not been in India during these months. I do not suppose I could have done much good to anybody but still it is good to be in a fight and to give and receive hearty blows. My sympathies during the present conflict are of course with the Swarajists and yet I cannot raise any enthusiasm even for their programme. I have to fall back on them largely because the other groups—the Responsivists and the much advertised but singularly puerile party, the Independent Congress Party—are according to my thinking utterly in the wrong. I regret even more my inability to attend the Gauhati Congress. It will be the first Congress I shall miss for many years, excepting the sessions I could not attend when I was in jail.

The scrappy news that one gets here about Indian affairs is usually highly coloured and it is difficult to get at the true facts. I gather however that the Swarajists are doing well in the elections—in a few days probably the full results will be out. Indian papers make sorry reading and almost invariably make one feel despondent or angry. And yet after some months in Europe I have begun to feel far more optimistic about India's future than I have done for the last three years or more. Every country in Europe has problems quite as difficult as ours and in some cases far worse. Even the communal trouble has its counterpart in religious differences and parties here. There is absolutely no chance of Europe settling down for many years to come and there is every probability of another big break-up within a few years. The League of Nations and all foreign policies and pacts are really being used as a preparation for this coming conflict. England has managed to get hated all over the Continent and hardly anybody here has a good word to say. But the diplomatic tradition is strong in England and they have still a knack of playing off their opponents against each other. Added to this they have the advantage of utilising the undoubted fear of Bolshevism which exists in most European countries. It is generally

1. Srinivasa Iyengar Papers, N.M.M.L.



taken for granted that the main protagonists in a future conflict will be England and Russia and the latter will certainly have the support of some other nations. In such a war Asia is likely to play a very big part and India will automatically become a dominating factor in the situation. It will make all the difference in the world to England whether India is contented or hostile to her. It is thus very much to England's interest to come to terms with Indian nationalists and perhaps English statesmen are really more desirous for peace in India than even our rather weary and tired politicians. But as there is no immediate danger England can afford to wait for a favourable opportunity when even small concessions will be eagerly swallowed by our leaders. She may even assume a generous role and give a little more than the situation may demand. The only thing that really frightens me is the prospect of our continuing to reduce our demands. And the fear is a very real one as the record of the last four years shows. From something which was akin to independence we came down to dominion rule and then to some bravely worded resolutions of the Legislative Assembly meaning ultimately not very much; later we practically accepted provincial autonomy and now with Lajpat Rai and the like producing a hybrid abortion of a programme I really do not know where we are and what we want. This is a fatal descent and can only end in disaster. There should be no talk or thought of making terms so long as we are down. The only terms we can get are those the victors give the vanquished. Unhappily our leaders are tired out and want rest and because of their weariness the national cause must suffer. If we are unable to do anything effective at present let us give up demands and threats but on no account must we talk of compromise on any terms except the best. Our present weakness must be no measure of the freedom we want. This should be so in any event, regardless of other possibilities. As a matter of fact, however, the position of India is a very strong one if a longer view is taken and if world politics are considered.

Personally, I have long regretted that the Congress did not definitely adopt independence for its goal. I wish it had done so at Ahmedabad. Since then there has not been a suitable opportunity and the various attempts made have made matters worse. I cannot conceive that India can even have full Dominion Status with all it implies. Our interests are so antagonistic to those of England in almost every sphere that Dominion Status would immediately and automatically lead to independence. What is possible however is that we may be given something called Dominion Status but very different and limited. For the matter of that even a so-called independence may be a trivial affair



as in the case of Egypt. I think we should not lose ourselves in these vague terms but concentrate on something definite and clear like full control of the army and finances. If we have this control it does not matter by what name it is called. So far as I am aware very little is said about the control of the army in our utterances and propaganda. Almost like the liberals most of us seem to think that it will be too big for us to swallow and even if we swallowed it, it might cause indigestion. From the point of view of world politics however it is essential that we should lay stress on the immediate withdrawal of the British army and our control of the Indian army. The English are of course continuing their propaganda of the danger of an invasion from the north west and frightening all our *banias* and old women, and when the crisis comes there is little doubt that they will stampede our politicians into voting supplies and otherwise supporting the English in a war, unless effective steps are taken to educate not only the general public but our leaders on the right lines. In the event of war between Russia and England, the N.W. Frontier will become perhaps the most important area of struggle and India will have a difficult problem before her. We cannot look forward with any complaisance to a Russian and Afghan invasion of India, still less can we assist British imperialism in such a war. If we have the courage and our people have been accustomed to the idea, we can take affairs in our own hands and try to keep out of the conflict, though this will be difficult. Or we can almost dictate our terms to the British. I wish therefore that sufficient stress might be laid on this aspect. The very first thing is to carry on incessant propaganda against the use of Indian troops anywhere outside India, specially against the Chinese or in Western Asia. From this it follows that the Indian army must not be used for furthering the imperialistic designs of England or indeed for any war without the express consent of the Indian people or their representatives. And lastly that the British army must leave India and the Indian army put under the control of the elected Indian government. One other matter I should like our leaders to bear in mind. In future whenever terms or compromise is discussed all promises must be ruled out. We cannot trust in any promises. Whatever our demand may be, must apply to the present and must be given effect to forthwith.

I am afraid you will probably consider these effusions of mine, uncalled for and without any bearing on the present situation. Very likely this is so. Most of your time and energy at Gauhati will be taken up in rebutting the attack of the medley crew ranged against the present Congress policy. Most of them—like Lajpat Rai—have lost all faith in any substantial advance and therefore want to work for something



communal or otherwise trivial. Lajpat Rai's ideas of world politics are, I imagine, derived from a few friends he has in the moderate Labour ranks in England. And the Labour Party in England is a most useless body so far as India is concerned. Ramsay MacDonald has made it clearly known to his friends that he will do nothing for India. A few members of the Independent Labour Party have made more promises to India but they represent nobody in particular and are not likely to be an effective force in British politics for a very long time. Besides, at heart almost every Englishman is a bit of an imperialist. I wish our leaders will forget everything about the British Labour Party and try to understand what is happening elsewhere in the world.

The victory of the Canton Government in China is one of the facts which is likely to have a tremendous effect on our future. I hope the Congress will warmly welcome it and extend their congratulations to the Kuomintang—the Chinese Nationalist Party. Also that they will strongly condemn the use of Indian soldiers and police in Shanghai and elsewhere. You might be surprised to know how much interest is taken in India and our nationalist movement in all manner of places—England excluded—and such expressions of sympathy and condemnation have considerable value.

There is one other matter I wish to write about. A league has recently been formed against oppression in the colonies. The name is rather deceptive but it is really a league against all forms of imperialism. Its headquarters are in Berlin, and in Germany their propaganda is directed against Germany taking any colonies. But naturally most of their work will be against the imperialistic tendencies of countries already possessing colonies and dependencies and specially England, the arch-imperialist. They are holding a world conference in Brussels towards the end of January and it appears that this conference will be a very representative assembly. An invitation was sent some time ago to the Indian National Congress but I suppose little attention was paid to it. I am told that about 400 organisations in various parts of the world will be represented. China is sending a strong contingent. The Kuomintang and the Canton Government will be officially represented and so will a number of universities and other bodies. The Government of Mexico will also be represented probably because they have a grievance against the United States. I enclose some papers which will give you some information on the subject. I think it would have been very desirable for the Congress to send some competent representatives. I do not know if it is possible now owing to the shortness of time and also owing to your other internal difficulties but if it is at all possible, it should be done. Some of the people connected with the conference may not



be very desirable but this does not take away from it its utility. The conference may also have a communist tinge. I should not like our Congress to identify itself with communism but I think that participating in the Brussels conference will in no way result in this. The Congress delegation should consist of at least three persons, one of whom should be well up in economics and the military policy of the Indian Government. It would be desirable if there was a Mohammedan also. I should have thought that a delegation consisting of Sarojini Naidu, Shuaib Qureshi and a third who is an economist of the right kind would be a good one. As I am here I might join it but I should not like to go all by myself. The opportunity is too good to be lost. We shall have an excellent chance of getting into touch with interesting people from other countries.

I am writing on this subject to my father also and to Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. If all of you really think it worthwhile, some steps will have to be taken even before the Congress meets at Gauhati; otherwise it may be too late. At the latest people should arrive in Brussels by the end of January.

There is an exhibition also in connection with the Brussels conference. I wonder if anything could be sent from India. I cannot think of anything except books—Martial Law Reports, Guru-ka-Bagh etc. Perhaps there may be some films also.

I am told that the Trade Union Congress of India is sending a representative to Brussels. Also the South African Indian Congress. Probably Andrews will be one of the representatives but I am not sure.

The Brussels Conference Committee have collected some funds to meet the expenses of the conference. The Mexican Government has given them money, so also other organisations. They are prepared to help a little towards meeting the expenses of delegates but obviously they cannot be expected to pay everything including travelling expenses. Besides, it would be derogatory for the Congress to ask for such expenses. It is possible however to have the actual expenses incurred by delegates in Belgium met by the conference, if the travelling expenses are paid by the organisation sending delegates.

I hope you will forgive me for sending this long letter to you. I wanted to put some ideas before you even at the cost of boring you. Would you mind showing this letter to Rangaswami Iyengar? It is difficult to write all this again to him.

With the best of wishes for the Congress,

I am

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

## 2. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Dehra Dun Jail  
Jan. 23, 1933

Indu darling,

Our interview after seven and a half months has come and gone, you are again far away in Poona. It was good to see you looking healthy and well, but what is the good of having brief interviews and trying to rush through all one has to say with one eye on the watch all the time? Of all the many things I wanted to tell you and ask you, very few came to my mind at the time. I shall not see you again for many months.

I have written to Mr. Vakil suggesting that you might prepare for the Cambridge Senior and not for the matriculation. The Senior will probably fit in better with a future course of study in Europe. Where this future course is going to be I do not know. We shall have to consider this later on together. There is no hurry. Much will depend on what you want to be. Have you thought of this ever? Last year you wrote to me once that you wanted to be a teacher. To teach others is a very wonderful thing but of course one can only teach after one has learnt a lot oneself. There are many other fascinating kinds of work in the world but to do anything well a great deal of training is necessary. Boys or girls in India have not had many professions or lines of activity open to them. Large numbers of boys want to become lawyers or take service and even girls are trying to go the same way. But this is just a way to earn money. It is not good enough just to earn money, although in our present world some money has to be earned. What is far more important is to do something that is worthwhile and that does good to the larger society we live in. I dislike intensely my own old profession, that of a lawyer. I call it an unsocial profession for society does not profit by it. It makes people selfish and just clever enough to exploit others. I would not therefore call the lawyer's profession a worthwhile one. He does not create anything or add to the good things of the world. He merely takes a part of other people's belongings.

There are other unsocial professions also like the lawyer's. Indeed the most honoured people in India still are those who do nothing at all and merely live in luxury on what their parents have left them. We need not consider all these unsocial people.

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



What are the social and useful forms of activity? There are so many, I cannot even give a list of them. Our present-day world is so complicated that thousands of kinds of activities are necessary to keep it going. As you grow and study and your circle of knowledge widens you will have some glimpse of these varied activities—millions of people in different parts of the world producing goods—food, clothing and innumerable other things; millions of others carrying these goods to others and distributing them. You buy something in a shop. Behind the shop there are all manner of factories and machines and workers and engineers, and behind the factories are the fields and mines supplying materials. It is all very complicated and fascinating, and the worthwhile thing to do is for each one of us to help in this useful work.

We may be scientists for science today is at the back of everything; or we may be engineers or those who apply science to man's everyday needs; or doctors who apply science to lessen human suffering and root out diseases by hygiene and sanitation and other preventive measures; or teachers and educationists training all ages from babies up to grown men and women; or up to date modern farmers on the land increasing the yield of the land by new scientific devices and thus adding to the wealth of the country, and so on.

What I wanted to tell you was that we are all members of a huge living thing called society, which consists of all manner of men and women and children. We cannot ignore this and go our way doing just what we please. This would be as if one of our legs decided to walk away regardless of the rest of the body! So we have to fit in our work, so as to help society in functioning. Being Indians we shall have to work in India. All manner of changes are going to take place in our country and no one can say what it will be like a few years hence. But a person who is trained to do something that is worthwhile is always a valued member of society.

I have written all this just to make you think on the subject. Of course I want you when you grow up to be strong and self-reliant and well trained for useful work. You do not want to depend on others. There is no hurry to decide.

If you go to Europe to carry on your studies you must know French well. I should have liked you to know German too as this is very useful in many things. But that can wait. The younger you are the easier it is to learn languages.

Do you know, you are just about the age now that I was when I first went to England with Dadu and was put in Harrow school. That was long long ago—28 years ago!

We had hail here today and all the mountains are covered again with snow. You were not lucky enough to see this fine sight.

All my love and kisses,

Your loving  
Papua

### 3. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Dehra Dun Jail  
February 7th, 1933

Indu darling,

I have your letter. You need not trouble to keep an accurate record of the dates when you have to write to me. Write to me roughly once a fortnight—say at the beginning of the month and the middle—and your letter will be delivered to me whenever it is due. Or you can answer my letters when you receive them.

You must have been not a little surprised to find from the postcard I sent to Mr. Vakil that I had changed my mind about your appearing for the matric. I must apologise to you for this quick change! When you came here we hardly talked on this subject. I dislike the matric as an examination simply because it is meant to open the door to some of the universities here which I do not fancy. So I told you not to bother about it. I also wrote accordingly to Mr. Vakil. Two days after writing to him I received a letter from him. In this letter he mentioned several things which made me change my mind. The first was that many of your fellow students were preparing for the matric and it would make it pleasanter for you to study with them and have a common aim. To work singly and on one's own account is apt to get rather boring. The preparation for the matric would not come in the way of your Senior later on but would be a help. And then exams are funny things. If one is not used to them, one gets worried and flustered at the time and is unable to put down even what one knows. This is just a question of getting used to it, as there is no reason why one should worry. Mr. Vakil suggested, and I think rightly,

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



that a simpler exam like the matric would help you in getting used to exams and then later when you appear for the Senior you would feel much more at home. These were the reasons which made me change my mind. I hope you agree. I gathered from Mr. Vakil's letter that you were quite agreeable to take the matric. So go ahead! By the way when is this matric?

I understand that you feel a little crowded and would like a little privacy for your study. I quite appreciate this. It is not easy to work in a crowd, and besides one likes to sit by oneself occasionally. I hope something will be arranged. I understand that your school is going into bigger quarters in July. But even before that some arrangement might be made. Now that Kamal Nayan also has joined your school as a boarder, you must be a tight fit. Where does he live? I suppose it would be easy to fit up tents if necessary. Anyway as mummie is in Calcutta and I am in Dehra Dun, you might speak to *puphi* of anything that you may want and she will try to fix it up.

Your school, as you know, is a private school. One might almost call it something between a home and a school. As such, it has certain advantages which an ordinary school has not got and at the same time there are certain disadvantages. The advantages are that you get more care and attention and affection and a kind of home life. That is a very great thing and it has made me happy to know that you are with friends and are well looked after. If you had been at an ordinary school I would have been anxious about you. The disadvantages of a private school are that you have few companions. A big school is a world in itself and prepares one in a way for the wider world, or at any rate for the university. At present you may feel rather cooped up occasionally and wish to have more companions. But soon enough you will enter the wider sphere of a university or wherever you go to continue your studies and you will have crowds of companions there. You have a bare year more for your present school work. After the Senior you will naturally have to work in a wider sphere. A year is not a very long time. Employ it to fit yourself mentally and physically for the bigger world you may enter next year.

I presume you are carrying on your French lessons with the Mlle. How do you go to her? Do you go walking or by a conveyance? It depends on how far she lives. If she lives any distance away it might be convenient for you to go by bicycle. If so we could easily arrange to get a bicycle for you in Poona or Bombay. You are not used to cycling but you can soon get used to it. One should know it.

I am glad you have got a matron to look after the kids now. This will give more time to your auntie to do other things.

I am interested to know that now you are the न्यायाधीश<sup>2</sup> of your school society. If this means less work for you, your school children must be very well behaved.

I hope you enjoyed your picnic to Vithalvadi.

Love from

Your loving  
Papu

2. Nyayadhish, a prefect.

#### 4. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Dehra Dun Jail  
February 21, 1933

Darling Indu,

Yesterday I sent you two books. One was a child's book *Tootleoo*—I hope you will not think it beneath your grown-up dignity to receive a book for children! I sent for it as I had read somewhere that it was very good and comparable to *Alice in Wonderland*. Alice being an old favourite of mine I could not resist the temptation of sending for a book which was thought good enough to be compared with immortal Alice. *Tootleoo* was of course quite different but I enjoyed it and could not help laughing at many of the pictures. I hope the book amused you and the other children.

The other book was Bernard Shaw's play *Saint Joan*. Do you remember seeing this play in French in Paris when a little Russian woman made a charming Jeanne? We also saw the play in English later but I do not remember if you were with us then. It is a very fine play—some parts of it may strike you as a bit dull. But the story is a great one and it bears reading and re-reading. As Jeanne is an old favourite and heroine of yours, you will like it. The book also contains another play which perhaps you may not like. The two long prefaces also might prove a bit dull for you.

You must be busy with your work and your preparation for the examination. Still I suppose you do have some time occasionally for other reading. That is why I sent you *Saint Joan*.

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



Mummie writes to me that someone from Austria came to see her accompanied by Birju Bhai and he offered to take you away immediately to Vienna for schooling! Vienna is a very beautiful place; it is the home of music. The Viennese are delightful people but their country is having a terrible time at present. *Puphi* told me that a German lady, who stayed in Anand Bhawan recently, was keen on making arrangements for your education in Germany. Plenty of people seem to be interested in your future education besides your father and mother! Well perhaps some day, before very long, you will go away to a far country to carry on your education, leaving us rather lonely here. We have trained ourselves for it by long spells in jail! Anyway we shall put up with it of course for it is more important that you should have good training and every opportunity to fit yourself for the work that may lie ahead of you, than that we should have the selfish joy of seeing you frequently and having you near us.

But all this is still a part of the future and we need not worry ourselves about it just yet. For the present you have to carry on with your present work and to do it well so that you may easily triumph over any examinations or anything else of the kind that may come your way. And for the present I have to carry on in Dehra Dun Jail!

But I should like you to write to me your own ideas about your future. You will remember my asking you about this in one of my recent letters. What would you like your job in after-life to be? What subjects and what work interest you? Of course as we grow we change our opinions about this very much. The little boy's ideal in life is to be an engine driver! But still if you will write to me from time to time what ideas you have in your little head I should be so glad.

I gather that you were vaccinated again in Bombay. I dislike vaccination but I suppose it has to be done.

Dolamma or Dadi—what do you call her now?—will probably go to Poona next month. Babu wants her to stay there for a while near him.

Yesterday as I was writing this letter it was snowing on the hills round Mussoorie and when I went out in the evening the hill tops were radiant with snow.

Love from

Your loving  
Papu

## 5. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Dehra Dun Jail

2.5.33

Indu darling,

You were not looking the picture of health when I saw you that day! I hope you have got rid of your pain and fever. You must have caught a chill. The weather is so changeable here and one must be careful. If you have still any pain in the neck have it massaged with the almond oil I gave mummie.

I am glad you are corresponding with your old French school-mate. Why not write to her in French and ask her to do so also? Is she still at Bex? And how is Bex getting on?

Don't read too much here—walk and run and generally live a physical life. Of course too much of the physical life is apt to be boring and the mind must be kept well-oiled and functioning. But the holidays are not meant for hard mental work. Also I have often felt that you read rather fast. In doing so, one is often liable to miss much in a book. Some light books of course have to be read fast; there is little in them. But a worthwhile book deserves a little more time and attention. Think of the pains and the great deal of thinking that the author has put behind what he has written, and when we just rush through it we miss his real meaning, and forget soon enough what we read.

A very good habit to develop is to keep a notebook in which we can jot down anything that pleases us or strikes us specially in a book we read. These notes of ours help us to remember much and we can always go back to them with interest. In jail I have specially developed this habit and I am now running my seventeenth notebook!

I hope anyway that you will read my series of letters to you rather slowly and a bit at a time. Don't rush them; otherwise they will bore you tremendously. They are not very light reading.

I suppose you have enough books to read. If not, just let me know and I can suggest or send some.

During our last interview I talked and talked and talked. Terrible was it not? Like a tap left open! Next time you will have to do the talking and I shall listen; and if I try to talk too much, stop me. I keep bottled up for two weeks and then when I get a chance I am apt to rush away with it.

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



There are plenty of birds in Dehra Dun at present. I wish I knew all their names. I suppose your garden has many of them. There is the koel of course, and the 'brain-fever' bird, I think that is the name. Why this curious name has been given to it I don't quite know, unless it is because its persistence is likely to give people brain fever! I must say that it is very trying sometimes. Its four notes are pleasant enough but ceaseless repetition night and day—rain or sunshine—is too much of a good thing. It goes on hour after hour. I do not know its Hindustani name but it is referred to in a variety of ways. People here say its four notes mean मैं सोता था<sup>2</sup>—up in the hills they say the bird sings काखल पाको<sup>3</sup>—*kakhal* being something grown in the fields. This is the time for it to ripen and so the bird announces it! You can imagine almost anything out of the four notes—उठो जागो<sup>4</sup> etc. A powerful noise it makes—it carries a good way.

Bapu has hurled another thunderbolt at us and I do not know what is going to happen.<sup>5</sup>

I have no news of the *puphi* and the children. They ought to be in Mussoorie today.

*Au revoir bien aimee* and love,

Your loving  
Papoo

2. I was sleeping.
3. *Kakhal* has ripened.
4. Awake and arise.
5. Mahatma Gandhi's announcement of a fast of 21 days.

## 6. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Dehra Dun Jail  
16.5.33

My darling Indu,

I was just thinking that you ought to pay a little visit to Mussoorie, and had decided to write to you about it, when news came that you were going to do so. I am glad you are going or perhaps have already gone. Dehra Dun is at the best of times rather a quiet and dull place and I don't suppose you have many acquaintances here. A little change now and then will do you good and cheer you up.

That is as it should be. We are all sometimes rather apt to get hot and bothered. But it is rather silly, don't you think? And it makes us

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

look a bit ridiculous to others. No one who is excited and worked up looks his best. Of course we can't always help getting a little excited but it is always a sign of a crack in our education or training. After all what is the whole end and aim of education—from one point of view at least? It is: not to be hot and bothered whatever happens and to fit oneself to the people one comes across and try to cooperate with them. In India, I am afraid, one is always coming across people who are losing their tempers and generally making a nuisance of themselves. Perhaps they think that they cut a fine figure, not realising how silly they look. They shout and curse at servants, a thing you hardly ever see in the West. In England, among decent people, it is considered the limit of bad form to shout at a servant, for the poor servant is not in a position to answer back. It is like kicking a person who is down. And yet in India most people indulge in this degrading habit. If people only realised that they injured themselves more by such habits than they do others, probably they would behave better.

I did not know about Shama joining a film company till I read about it in your letter. I agree with you. It would have been far better if she had joined a good company once she was about it. As a matter of fact it would have been an easy thing to arrange and, strange as it may seem, I might even have helped from here! I don't suppose Ladli *chacha* is very happy about this.

You seem to have frightened Bebee about my health and she has sent me a letter full of worry and anxiety. How did you think, my dear, that I was languishing away? Perhaps the long stream of talk that I indulged in! I am keeping remarkably well and little things like applying iodine for an old pain at the side, have nothing to do with it. In your letter you tell me that you had a terrible headache. Do you know that I hardly know—in spite of my 43 years—what a bad headache is, or for the matter of that even a mild one?

We have had two interviews, you and I, and on both the occasions I have done most of the talking. A jail interview is not a natural way of meeting; one feels a little constrained and the time limit oppresses one. Still I would like you next time to tell me something about yourself and your school and what you would like to do. If you do not tell me how you feel how can I help you? The secret of doing a thing well, whatever it may be, is to cooperate with others in the doing of it. Do you know that in schools and in homes there are supposed to be two kinds of children who do not make good progress and who give a lot of trouble. They are called problem children. One is the spoilt child who has been used at home to getting everything



he or she wants without working for it or any other trouble. The other is the neglected child whom people at home, usually in large families where there are many children, ignore and who is thus not properly looked after. Both the spoilt child on the one hand and the neglected one on the other get little chance of cooperating with others, of working together with others in a common undertaking. So they do not develop the habit of cooperation and all their subsequent troubles are said to be due to this. It is because of this that they become what are called problem children who offer special problems to their teachers as to how to deal with them. The spoilt child when he or she goes out into the world expects everyone to pat him on the back all the time as he was patted at home. Of course nobody does so and the spoilt child gets very angry and blames everybody when really the fault is his own and not other people's. The neglected child has been badly treated at home and is not used to meeting people. So when he goes out, he keeps apart from others and feels dissatisfied and angry and blames everybody.

This is not so with children only, but with grown-ups also. Most of us are either spoilt or neglected and so have grown up rather crooked and we are always blaming others for our own faults. The right thing of course is to be neither; to be something in between the two, healthy in mind, meeting others and always trying to cooperate with them and doing one's own share of the job without expecting others to do it.

Children, naturally, do not and cannot understand all these niceties. They behave as they have been taught to behave or as they have seen others behave. I am writing all this because you are a sensible girl and I can speak to you more as a friend than as a daughter of mine. I know you will understand. Your father was himself a bit of a spoilt child. For many years he was the only child, for his sisters came long afterwards, and only children are apt to be spoilt by their parents by too much affection. I suppose he still bears traces, and very evident traces, of having been spoilt not only by his parents but by so many other people! You are an only child also and a dearly loved one, and perhaps unconsciously your parents and grandparents have spoilt you just a wee bit also and made you expect much in the world that you may not find there. I cannot judge, neither can you, for we are both partial and we are too near each other to have a good view. But I imagine that however much we may have erred, led away by our exceeding love for you, recent events or rather public happenings since your childhood upwards, have strengthened you and stiffened you and pulled you up from the spoilt variety which always thinks of itself and little of others.

I do not know why I am writing on like this. It is more of a talk—as if you were sitting by me. What I began with was this—that I should like you during our next interview to have a talk with me about yourself and your school and your ideas in general about the future. As you know, your time in your present school will end before long. What is more important is the next step and we must have a talk about that and discuss it among ourselves and cooperate together to make this step a real good one. So my dear, that must be the programme for May 23rd, 9 a.m. But only if you are willing and will cooperate.

I hope Rust will make some good pictures of you both in a frock and in a sari.

There is a delightful story about a lion cub in the *New Statesman* I am sending. It is on page 503 and is called *The Lion that Lost its Way*.

Love

Your loving  
Papu

## 7. To Indira Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Dehra Dun Jail  
Aug. 1, 1933

Indu *bien aimee*,

Your letter reached me a long time after it was written, and now I am writing a week later than I might have done. It is three weeks since I wrote to you. Mummie's visit to Poona has resulted in my interview days and letter-writing days being changed and pushed on by a week.

Now about your health. I am glad you are going to the clinic and taking natural treatment for your digestive and other troubles. This kind of treatment takes longer than the usual methods of swallowing large doses of medicine but it is much better in the end. Most of us treat our bodies very badly; we ignore the simple rules of health and especially upset our digestion, and otherwise shake up our systems. The body, as you know, is a fine and delicate machine, and yet it is remarkable how much misuse it puts up with. As the body happens to be a big bit of ourselves we might as well try to understand it and be friends with it and treat it with consideration. Do not get impatient

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.



or worried if you have any pains or ailments. Get to the bottom of the matter and root them out and then you will know radiant health and feel the *joie de vivre*. Nature treatment is cooperation with the body and so I like it better than too much dosing with medicine. It is possible of course to make a fad of it sometimes.

Most of our bodily troubles are due to 'little tummy' going wrong, constipation etc. If this habit develops in childhood it persists sometimes through life. People take to using laxatives and become slaves to them and that is bad. With a good digestion one can face almost any body trouble. You tell me that Dr. Mehta made you take only orange juice for a few days. This semi-starvation must have been a little hard for you. But it is good to give the inside a rest.

You know that I am rather conceited about many things! One of these is my health. For years and years, when I was at school and college in England, I never had occasion to consult a doctor. For about a dozen years or more I never took a laxative because I did not need it. My general health was good because my tummy functioned properly.

I received a telegram and a card from Mr. Vakil and I answered them. I am not writing to him today because I must not write too many letters, but you can give him my message. I don't like the idea of plague appearing in the Poona cantonment area but I suppose one has to put up with this kind of thing. Anyway where you live is a fine open place and I have no doubt that all precautions are taken. About plague inoculation I accept it only as a necessary evil. The idea of having dead disease microbes stored into you is not a pleasant one but if a competent doctor considers this essential then I am not prepared to come in the way. I was myself inoculated when I was 12 or 13 years old. I suppose the effect of that has passed off long ago.

I have told Mr. Vakil that I leave it to his discretion (taken in consultation with the doctor) as to whether you should be inoculated. I would prefer if you are not inoculated, and as the few odd cases of plague in the cantonment area have stopped now, perhaps this may be possible.

It is extraordinary how one puts on weight by reducing one's food. Some months ago I lost a little weight. Then for various reasons, unconnected with my health, I gave up one of my daily meals. Since then I have been putting on weight! It is possible that one eats more at the remaining meals, or it is more likely that there is better assimilation of what one eats.

Is your throat well now? What does the doctor say about the tonsils?

I am rather sorry Chand did not go to Poona. When she came to see me, on her way down from Mussoorie, she seemed to be quite agreeable to doing so. It is difficult to advise others without knowing all the facts. Home life is a complicated affair where many things have to be considered and so perhaps *puphi* and *pupha* decided to keep the children for a while with them.

About my dogs I shall make some arrangement for them here. I cannot carry them away with me. Travellers should have as little luggage as possible, especially those who wish to travel far.

I have just received a book called *The Girl Through the Ages*. Perhaps it may interest you. I may send it on after some days.

You have not told me yet, although I asked you, whether that book of mine—Hans Kohn's book on the Hither East—reached Vallabhbhai Patel. I should like to know.

Today is the anniversary of many international and national events of importance—August 1st. It is also mummie's birthday according to the Gregorian calendar. According to the *Samvat* era the birthday has already taken place.

There was a paper attached to your letter containing some limericks. They were not very brilliant and some lines were difficult to understand. Here are some interesting and famous limericks. Tell me which you like.

There was a young fellow named Lloyd,  
Who was seldom, if ever annoyed,  
And though you might choke him,  
You could not provoke him,  
His *sang* was so terribly *froid*.

There was a faith-healer of Deal  
Who said, "Although pain isn't real,  
If I sit on a pin  
And it punctures my skin  
I dislike what I fancy I feel."

The famous scientist Einstein has discovered a theory which is known as Relativity. It deals with time and space and mixes the two up and calls them space-time. Here is a limerick on this theory:

There was a young lady named Bright  
Who could travel much faster than light.  
She started one day  
In the relative way,  
And came back the previous night.



And here are two curious ones—the second one being in answer to the first:

There once was a man who said "God  
Must think it exceedingly odd  
If he finds that this tree  
Continues to be  
When there is no one about in the Quad."\*

The reply:

Dear Sir,  
Your astonishment's odd:  
I am always about in the Quad.  
And that's why the tree  
Will continue to be,  
Since observed by

Yours faithfully,  
God.

All my love,

Your loving  
Papu

\*A quad is short for quadrangle—Oxford college courtyards are so called.





# GLOSSARY

Ashvin Badi	the fortnight of the seventh month of the lunar calendar when the moon is waning
Bari	elder
Barsat	rain
Bhadrapad	the sixth month of the lunar calendar
Chachi	aunt, the wife of the father's younger brother
Chapathies	unleavened flat bread
Chenar	Persian name of the oriental Plane-tree found mostly in Kashmir
Chhoti	younger
Dalis	gifts
Darbari	courtly
Dhobin	washerwoman
Gaddi	throne
Gora	the 'whites'
Himsa	violence
Jumma	Friday
Kartik Badi	the fortnight of the eighth month of the lunar calendar when the moon is waning
Katora	bowl
Khandan	clan
Khanjan	wagtail
Kholo	open
Manjhis	boatmen
Mantra	an invocation
Mazhab	religion
Moulvi	a Mohammedan well learned in Arabic and Persian literature
Namaz	prayer
Peshis	produced in court or in the presence of authority

Phalgun	twelfth month of the lunar calendar
Puja Holidays	vacation for the religious festival, <i>Dushera</i>
Pupha	uncle, the husband of the father's sister
Ramzan	the month when Muslims fast
Sanatan Dharma	the orthodox Hindu religion
Sanatanists	orthodox Hindus
Satsang	gathering of devotees
Satya Yuga	also known as <i>Krta Yuga</i> , the first of the four ages according to Hindu mythology
Shravan	fifth month of the lunar calendar
Stupa	a Buddhist monument containing relics
Thali	plate
Thana	police station
Thela	cart
Varnashrama Dharma	duties relating to the four stages of life according to Hindu scriptures
Vasanta Utsava	festival of Spring



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